

# STUDIES IN QATARI THEATRE

DR. Mohamed A. Qafoud

Translated by  
Prof. Sedik Bakr Tawfik





بِسْمِ اللّٰهِ الرَّحْمٰنِ الرَّحِیْمِ

*In the Name of God  
Most Gracious  
and Most Merciful*





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**Prof. SEDIK BAKR TAWFIK**

**National Council for Culture, Arts and Heritage**

DOHA - QATAR





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Born in Mosul in 1944 and studied English Literature in the Universities of Baghdad, Leeds and Exeter. Among his translations are Tennessee Williams' *Suddenly Last Summer*, Bernard Shaw's *In the Beginning*, Edgar Allan Poe's *The Sphinx*, Hemingway's *The Killers*, Colin Wilson's *The Marquis de Sade*, Richard Ellmann's *Last Days of Oscar Wilde*, and whatnot.

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# Preface

Translation has played an important role in the history of human cultures and has significantly contributed to cultural communication among peoples and to the spread of knowledge and development of sciences, literatures and arts.

Its roles have become even greater in the twenty first century; the century of total triumph of the scientific and technological revolution which removed all technical and geographical obstacles and brought peoples of the world close to each other. Indeed, linguistic interaction has become a modern necessity among all the peoples who love peace and progress, as translation is considered the backbone of twentieth-century civilization.

We, at the National Council for Culture, Arts and Heritage, have established an aspiring plan to translate publications of heritage, culture and literature from Arabic into English and French in order to introduce to other countries of the world our literature and cultural achievements in the different areas of thought and culture, as these two languages are the most widely-spread in the entire world. We hope that in the future we will be able to translate samples of our intellectual heritage into the world's other living languages, especially languages of the peoples to which we are linked with cultural and historical ties.

We will do our best to continue our national project to translate the treasures of Qatari culture into the world's living languages. To do that, we will select the best fiction, verse and drama texts, in addition to critical and intellectual works. We believe that only the texts that are carefully selected can introduce to the world any literature, and these texts are the pillars on which stands literary and intellectual communication.

Indeed, the translation project of the National Council for Culture, Arts and Heritage draws its principles from the policy of openness to the world, firmly established by H. H. Shaikh Hamad bin Khalifa Al-Thani the country's beloved Emir who gives a special priority to cultural development in the State of Qatar.

**Shaikh/ Saud bin Mohammed bin Ali AL- Thani**

Chairman of the

National Council for Culture, Arts and Heritage



## About the Book

Academics have played an important vital role in the different areas associated with social development of the Gulf Cooperation Council Countries during the last decades after the discovery of oil and the subsequent development and prosperity.

Many academics embraced pure academic work in research centres and universities on one hand and social public affairs on the other. Among these is the Qatari critic Dr. Mohammed Abdul-Raheem Kafood who practised teaching and University administrative work and who had an active part in steering the literary and cultural movement not only in Qatar but in the other GCC countries.

A close look at the list of his publications shows that he is a many-sided critic who has a comprehensive intellectual vision that goes beyond the geographical boundaries of the GCC and travels to pan-Arab intellectual space with all of its concerns. This was the pivot of his ideological thesis in his highly-esteemed book *Status of the Arab Intellectual and His Role in Society*, and this is an issue which still preoccupies Arab intellectuals and academics with all their different intellectual and political schools of thought.

The dominant feature of Dr. Kafood's critical studies is the complete dependence on the dramatic, fictional and poetic texts of contemporary Qatari and Gulf authors and writers. He approached them with a profound and original analysis from his own literary and aesthetic perspective, a thing which has really made him a prominent critic of this critical stage of the development of contemporary Qatari and Gulf literature, deserving all the esteem received from Gulf and Arabian literary circles.

The two studies which have been chosen for translation express genuinely his critical vision and academic methodology in approaching dramatic works. The first study is on artistic structure in Qatari theatre and the second on intellectual and social issues and therefore they form an integral work in which he deals with most of the plays written and presented on the Qatari stages for a period that extends beyond two decades. We can say that they are the most integrally comprehensive studies on the history of modern Qatari theatre.

To understand and know a number of issues concerned with the development of Qatari theatre, the reader will find important lists of Qatari plays of the past decades besides a full-length text of a one-act play by a prominent Qatari playwright, Saleh Al-Mannai.

Dr. Kafood's systematic approach to Qatari dramatists' plays makes him a realistic critic as much as an experimentalist critic who looks toward the future and who brooks no stiff academic texts. These qualities make the translation of his literary and critical studies acquire great importance for the purpose of introducing the works of an academic critic who is highly knowledgeable and who contributes to the processes of enlightenment and social development.

The two researches have been published in a book which contains many studies of Qatari theatre titled *Studies in Qatari Theatre* issued by the Directorate Culture, Arts and Heritage in the State of Qatar in 1998. This is the version adopted in this translation. Please write to the address which appears in this book to get the complete Arabic version.

### **The Editor**

# *Studies in Qatari Theatre*

## **Between Intellectual Vision and Artistic Structure**

It goes without saying that theatre has recently been introduced to Arabic literature. It is even more recent in Gulf literature. If we considered the theatrical experience in Qatar, we would find out that this art is not older than ten years, taking into consideration here the first attempts to create a theatrical movement, which, at its beginnings, was an undoubtedly improvised attempt.

I have referred to the movement in a previous essay.<sup>1</sup> I do not, however, intend here to approach these beginnings. From my pursuit of some plays performed these days, I can say that Qatari theatre is still crawling on its way, and I don't mean this from quantity viewpoint of performed plays, but in terms of quality. To be more precise, I say that the written playscript in particular has not clearly crystallised, and by this I mean the dramatic script characterised by depth of treatment of social issues in addition to artistic elements, because the scripts which we watch are often either Qatarised and adapted from Arabic plays and short stories or from international stories and plays.

The adapter tries to project on them any relevant social issues according to his talent, insight and awareness of these issues with the help of his artistic sensibility. In fact, this adaptation or Qatarisation has been attempted by many a dramatist, and some plays were performed but they were somehow naïve in tackling issues or, let us say, in their projections of some issues. At times, and there were many, the enforcement and the artificiality are conspicuous enough, besides the shallowness and vulgarity of some issues due to over-exaggeration and the didactic style of their treatment.

When we come to the playscript we in fact find that some scripts also tackle social problems in a documentary way; in other words, they represent these issues photographically. Most of these plays or the problems tackled by playwrights are restricted to marriage problems, expensive dowries, negative aspects in some officials and administrations, some phenomena of youth perversion and other likewise problems that appear on the surface, all of which require the playwright no more than pick them up, jot them down and finally present them in a documentary way, with a dash of sarcasm.

All that I have mentioned about the playwright gives us an almost full picture of the reality of the theatrical experience in Qatar, and this means that the theatrical experience is

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<sup>1</sup> *Modern Qatari Literature*, the chapter on theatre

still at the phase of its formation and the beginning of the road. Besides, there is no playwright who has a vision of his own by means of which he becomes able to tackle issues no matter how significant or considerable they are. Abdul-Rahman Al-Mannai is an exceptional playwright who has a considerable number of plays which show that he has a clear vision and coherent attitude in most of his plays.

This is, of course, due to the newness of the Qatari theatre, and that most of those who wrote or are writing for the theatre haven't written more than a couple of playscripts, and this doesn't give a clear idea about the playwright, in addition to the playwright's lack of good experience in this area.

As a matter of fact, writing a playscript can be about the most difficult type of literature. We, therefore, feel this scarcity or crisis in playscripts on the pan-Arab level, in comparison with fiction and other literary types.

This is a general impression about the theatrical movement in Qatar. I halt at a group of playscripts from which we can deduce some intellectual, social and national issues which preoccupy the playwrights, and their cultural tendencies which form serious indications and present issues and topics which deal with different aspects of our contemporary Arab life, and express those aspirations, ambitions and expectations sought by the Arab individual in order to transcend his current reality towards a bright future. Looking forward to the future is part of the human vision which becomes the more necessary when man feels that he is living amidst a cultural race never witnessed by human society throughout its long history as it is now. From this standpoint, a sense of cultural suffering is engendered in the Arab individual in addition to a sense of spatial and time alienation. This has been reflected in the Arab writers' most creative writing in its different aspects. This cultural tardiness characterizing the Arab homeland has led to an actual sense of a western cultural invasion which carries a lot of values, traditions and principles most of which don't agree with Moslem Arab areas. Here also comes suffering, and also erupts intellectual, psychological and cultural conflict not only between one civilization and another, but between the individuals of the same civilization, or same nation. This cultural and intellectual gap that the Arab individual lives has engendered many forms of a conflict accompanied usually by despair and grief or retardation with a feeling of nostalgia for the past and preferring it to the present. This agony and these experiences created variable standpoints among the writers and the authors who often condemn the present, and look forward to the future. This has emerged conspicuously enough in dramatic literature. The theatre is the ablest of all literary genres to embody the intellectual and cultural conflict



witnessed and lived by the writer. If a situation emerged from the relationship of the individual with the milieu he lives in and the ongoing surrounding factors of interactions, influences and effects, not only on the regional but the human level at large and the cultural conflict around it, the stance that the writer takes is a tool by which he aims at transcending reality towards a better future which he seeks and endeavors to reach. Isn't art, after all, the community's mirror by which its image is reflected, and through this image the community's cares and causes are incarnated and on which its attitudes crystallize?

In the playscripts which have emerged so far, one finds that most of these scripts were written in the vernacular and this is a point at which we must stop, as indeed it forms a negative phenomenon about the playwrights' tendency towards this practice. Perhaps the emergency of all these scripts in the vernacular is what makes the researchers hesitant in pursuing a study of the experience in Qatar. It will be clear to us through the special index of the plays' titles at the end of this study how much the output of this sort of scripts is. The question of the classical and the vernacular is an old one, and some orientalist and Arab scholars had a role in stirring this issue at the beginning of the new revival. The basis of this issue had perhaps political or ideological motives as it is well known.<sup>2</sup> This has no relevance to our topic directly, but the classical and the vernacular phenomenon in the area of theatre and fiction acquired another dimension. Pro- vernacularists establish their thesis on two bases. First, the element of realism in drama and fiction or what is called realism of performance. This means the taking into consideration the status of the character that speaks the dialogue. Some think that it is not feasible for the playwright to have the dialogue in classical language spoken by an illiterate person. They argue, how come that a driver, worker or a porter speak classical language?<sup>3</sup> This kind of speech- act would, as some think, lead to a sort of contradiction on the stage which the audience wouldn't accept, as it contradicts reality. We therefore find that some have allowed the writing of colloquial dialogue when the situation requires it<sup>4</sup>

They think that the vernacular is abler to express human feelings and that it is closer to life's nature and reality.<sup>5</sup> They argue that these are some colloquial expressions and idioms which cannot be phrased in classical language.<sup>6</sup> and among pro- vernacularists' strong points which they cling to is that the vernacular is closer to the public's comprehension as it is the

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<sup>2</sup> see Dr. Ahmad Matloob, *Modern Literary Criticism in Iraq*, p. 130 and after.

<sup>3</sup> See Abdul – Raheem AL- Zarqani, Forum on Arab Heritage and Theatre, p 24

<sup>4</sup> Mahmood Taymoor, *Studies in Fiction and Drama*, p. 272

<sup>5</sup> Dr. Abdul- Qadir AL- Qit, *From Literary Arts and Drama*, p. 38

<sup>6</sup> Dr. Mohamed Ghunaimi Hilal, *On Literary Criticism*, p. 80

daily linguistic media of speech- act and that the public is saturated with it and appreciates its significances and responds to it swiftly and spontaneously.

These are the most important arguments and claims on which depend pro-vernacularists through their call for using the vernacular in writing drama and fiction.

How far, however, is the credibility of these arguments? Do we take them for granted as justifications to turn our back to classical language in this area, especially when fiction has become the dominant literary genre from the viewpoint of its wide- spread popularity in modern Arabic literature? Is it correct to waste this huge output by getting it out of the language's framework and disperse it in separate dialects so innumerable in the Arab world even in the one and same region?

Let us now consider some of these claims such as the question of language realism which is about the principal justification of pro – vernacularists. What is meant by realism in language? In order to be a realist, is one supposed to mimic reality to the letter? This is a thesis rejected by art, and rejected by reality, too. There is now no longer anyone who adheres to Plato's concept that art is an imitation of nature with all the meaning of the word imitation, although the Greek philosopher thought that imitation is weaker than the nature that imitates itself.<sup>7</sup>

Tate says “ By imitation, Plato intended two meanings: First. An ideal imitation that is yet to be on earth, and which he hopes to be existent in his ideal state in certain types of poetry. A bad imitation that gives a mirror- like image is to be rejected. ...”<sup>8</sup>

Objective fidelity, therefore, should not mean literal imitation, otherwise art would become useless according to Plato, as the world of art is completely different from the world of reality. It is true that the artist takes his raw material from reality, but he digests this material which interacts with himself, his thought and finally he moulds it with his emotions and feelings so that it changes into a new original creation. This is Coleridge's self- same theory of fancy which makes previous material melt and vanish to be created anew.<sup>9</sup>

Likewise, the artist does not take his material from reality to return it as it was, but he should re-create and re-form.<sup>10</sup> Then, why shouldn't this re-creation, re-formation and appropriate artistic construction include language as well? It follows then that realistic fidelity

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<sup>7</sup> Dr. Suhair AL- Qalamawi, *On Literature : Mimesis*, p74

<sup>8</sup> Ibid.

<sup>9</sup> Dr. Mohammed Zeki AL- Ashmawi, *Issues of Literary Criticism*, p. 62

<sup>10</sup> Mohammed Ghonaimi Hilal, , *On Literary Criticism*, p. 83

does not or should not mean that characters must be depicted as they are in reality, or as Dr. Mohammed Mandoor says, " By reality in literature it is not meant realism of language, but realism of the human psyche, life and society. It is a commonplace knowledge that an author doesn't make his fictional and dramatic characters bespeak their language but bespeak their situation. The author can, afterwards, express what he feels in any language he chooses. " <sup>11</sup>

Imitation of nature to the extreme degree required by the realists is impossible to exist on the stage, as in order to be realistic, we shall need to create on the stage many natural phenomena such as the sea, real animals, trees and whatnot. Says Al-Aqqad, "Dramatic art is, first and foremost, concerned with representing figurative situations and not mimicking phrases and reproducing tones."<sup>12</sup>

Perhaps the best example that illustrates this point and which replies back to propagators of realism in art is what Victor Hugo said when he illustrated the difference between the nature of art and that of reality:

" Let us pinpoint the well-established borderline which separates the truth according to art from the truth according to the nature. The truth of art cannot be absolute. Art cannot give the selfsame thing. Let us suppose that a fanatic propagator of absolute naturalism has seen the play *El Cid* in verse. It is not natural that a person speaks verse. If he was asked, "How do you want him to speak? ", he would reply, "Let him speak prose." If it was said to him, " Let it be," he would soon say again, if he were logical with himself, "Does *El Cid* speak in French?" then the answer is, "No, nature requires that he speaks in his language, and he cannot speak except in Spanish. Thus, real trees, real horses, etc. instead of the false replicas behind the scene. We should, therefore, admit that the realm of art and that of nature are completely distinguishable, as nature and art are two things not one, and without this difference neither of them can exit."<sup>13</sup>

From this we infer that literal realism is rejected in art, and that the representation of reality and fidelity to reality neither mean nor require making the fictional and dramatic characters bespeak their language but their situations, and artistically the author depicts their psychological sways and intellectual inclinations. Says Dr. Abdul- Qadair AL-Qitt ; " Realism in the theatre is neither a material realism nor a literal imitation of reality, but an artistic realism which depicts what is possible to be." <sup>14</sup>

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<sup>11</sup> Dr. Mohammed Mandoor, *On Literary Criticism*, p.12

<sup>12</sup> A.M.AL-Aqqad, *Hours with Books*, p. 144

<sup>13</sup> Mohammed Ghonaimi Hilal, *On Dramatic Criticism*, p. 84

<sup>14</sup> Abdul- Qadir AL- Qitt, *Dramatic Literary Arts*, p. 39

The other side of the question which is that the vernacular is more accurate in expressing the characters' emotions and feelings and that classical language is sometimes unable to express their meanings and feelings is an argument which is refuted by the history of the Arabic language which has been over the centuries an expressive instrument of social life in different areas and arts and sciences. It could be that the inability to command classical Arabic is the reason behind making some cling to the vernacular.

Arabic is a flexible language which kept abreast of the civilisation of this nation at its apogee in the Abbasid Age, and it was thus a vessel that could contain the entirety of sciences and knowledge which the Arabs translated from Greek and Persian and other languages.

This flexibility made Arabic acquire certain aesthetic characteristics. Parsing signals giving a variety of meanings to words is what made it acquire this characteristic and flexibility, whereas the vernacular lacks all this. Furthermore, Arabic could contain all the scientific, juridic and legislative terminologies used by scientists, lawyers and men of letters.

In the question of writing in classical language and the problem of illiteracy which dominates a huge sector of the Arab people, some think that the use of classical Arabic in drama and even in fiction keeps this large number of illiterates in the dark as they don't comprehend the language nor can they respond to the play or fiction due to the difficulty they find in classical language. There could perhaps be a certain degree of truth, but if we, on the other hand, adopted this viewpoint concerning the popularity of a work of art we would find out that the public of the vernacular is also limited, as each country has its own vernacular, even in one country we find more than one vernacular, so in which one should an author write? Classical language in this case is the more widespread and popular in the Arab world. If, however, the aims of the propagators of vernacular realism are to make literature an instrument to elevate the community and a means to develop and change it, let one of these aims be to elevate public taste and then educate the public and care for its language which is the most prominent principle of unity, understanding and interaction among its speakers. The author's message is to be a pioneer and a guide towards a better life and he is not supposed to humour the public but to elevate its taste and develop its capabilities.

Before starting analysing some samples of dramatic texts, it is necessary to have a quick look at the fundamentals of the artistic structure of drama so that it becomes clear, how far playwrights are successful in the artistic and dramatic structures of their plays.

As a matter of fact, the number of dramatic schools and the development which the history of drama has witnessed since Aristotle have made it quite difficult to specify stable laws and rules within whose frame all artistic structures could be included accurately. Generally speaking, art has the flexibility and capability to develop to keep abreast of the development of life and literary trends including dramatic schools. On the other hand, despite the variety of dramatic schools and the freedom of modern drama from adherence to some of the rules of classical theatre inherited from Greek theatre as indicated by Aristotle's three unities which were the most prominent aspect of the artistic structure of Aristotelian drama,<sup>(1)</sup> each art keeps its own principles, rules and bases on which it depends, despite the fact that theatre did not observe Aristotle's three unities as early as since the days of Shakespeare.<sup>(2)</sup> These principles and characteristics differentiate between art and non-art, as well as between the arts themselves. As much as there is difference between a story and a news report or essay, there is likewise difference between fiction and drama. The theme could be the same, as well as the dialogue and language could be the same, yet we say this is fiction and that is drama. The secret behind this is that each has a technique and a structure of its own. <sup>(15)</sup>

Dramatic structure in its artistic sense is not merely a theme + characters + dialogue, then it is divided into acts. This is not sufficient for the work to become dramatic in its artistic sense, as it is necessary to have other certain artistic qualities. As for example, the unity of dramatic structure is among the important and necessary elements, and we don't find this in many of the dramatic works discussed in this study.

If some playwrights and critics have been somewhat tolerant about Aristotle's unities, even they freed themselves altogether from the unities of time and place, we find that some plays have their settings in different places and times that could extend to longer periods than what is common in classical drama which is one revolution of the sun or a little longer.<sup>1</sup> Such matters have been overstepped by modern theatre. The main Unity of action which is the link between the main action and casual actions and maintains the total action still forms the basic element of the dramatic work. A play cannot be merely a series of actions or events which have no link among them, and some times, as we will see later, a number of acts which are separate from each other.

Casual actions which are not linked to the main action directly and which don't contribute to enriching and adding to it, ultimately lead to weakening and disintegrating the structure.

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<sup>(15)</sup> Dr. M.Z. AL-Ashmawi, *Studies in Dramatic Criticism*, p. 32

Says Aristotle, "what can and cannot be added without a tangible result is not part of the whole."<sup>16</sup>

When a playwright intends to depict a slice of life or a certain aspect of it, he undoubtedly doesn't include in his play everything he knows about this material from these aspects and he separates the relevant materials and re-construct them in a coherent and a consistent form which indicates an organic unity which keeps the audience's or the reader's attention. Herein come the playwright's role and his creative imaginative genius in convincing the spectator or the reader that the play's events are neither artificially fabricated nor forced on the play.<sup>1</sup> From this standpoint, we can also argue that disintegration in action which is often a result of direct imitation and the crowding of numerous events is what leads to the weakness of dramatic conflict in some plays.<sup>2</sup> Dramatic action requires concentration and the creation of intense scenes and the development of events and their complications on a convincing basis, in addition to the artistic portrayal of characters. The diversity of events and the incoherence of their structure lead to the audience's distraction. Although Bertold Brecht was the most nonconformist playwright in violating the unity of plot, he, as Dr. M.G. Hilal says, did not neglect the consistency of action. "He kept the unity of the rhythm of the action."<sup>17</sup>

There is another trend in the dramatic unity and that is the replacement of the unity of action by going deep into the portrayal of the characters' psychological states and the characters are linked to each other in their destiny facing the same situation or obstacle that threatens their destiny and limits their capabilities. The psychological states of these characters become the dramatic piece's structural unity so that the audience can link between events and characters' movement and their behavior on stage by means of the playwright's depiction of their psychological dimensions. Here, naturally, the physical conflict usually gets transformed to a psychological one on which the playwright depends on the complication of situations and the heightening of the dramatic piece through which is prepared the general atmosphere in front of the audience to imagine the general situation in the play.<sup>18</sup>

What all this boils down to is that consistency is necessary and it has not been neglected by modern drama but may sometimes be replaced by another unity as mentioned above. The dramatic piece's consistency is necessary in the process of dramatic structure. The inconsistency

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<sup>16</sup> As in Ghanim AL-Sulaiti's, the *Pelters*, Hamad Al-Rumaihi's, *The Debate* and Abdul-Rahaman AL-Mannai's *Oh, Money*.

<sup>17</sup> M.G. Hilal, *ibid*, p.605

<sup>18</sup> M.G. Hilal, *ibid*, p. 601

and disintegration in the majority of the dramatic pieces written by new playwrights are noticeable and this will be mentioned in my analysis of some of these texts.

The tendency of young playwrights to write in the vernacular is what made me tackle the issue of classical language and the vernacular. My dealing, therefore, with some of these issues was a pressing necessity in order to find common grounds on which to stand when discussing and analysing some of these texts.

*Like This, O Zafaran?* : Between Folk Tale and Symbolism

This play draws upon an old folk tale, and before discussing and analysing the play, it is necessary to give its plot summary.

The play tells about a farmer called Zafaran, an exemplar of simplicity and naivety who lives in a small village and who has a farm famous for producing very good mellons. He used to give away mellons liberally to the village folk. After his wife hears about city life, she insists on her husband to go to the city to sell his mellons, and to bring to her some items she needs. He doesn't resist her request, and he, therefore, puts his mellons on the mule's back. As he is on his way, an old man turns up to him and a dialogue ensues between the two men: the old man asks Zafaran if his village folk have had enough of the mellons that he is now going to sell them in the city. Then the old man warns him concerning the city and city life and morality. Zafaran continues his journey and he is surprised by three men wearing yellow clothes, and after a brief dialogue they loot some of his mellons. When he asks them why, they reply "that is it." Then he meets a second group, then a third one, each wearing clothes with different colours, and they all loot some of his mellons.

Before he reaches the city gate, he meets an old woman who offers water to his mule but not to him till the mule drinks enough water, then she lets Zafaran drink. Then a dialogue follows between Zafaran and the old woman. We understand that the old woman is complaining of human life and that she has rejected human company and decided to live alone. Zafaran, then, enters the city and asks for the marketplace and nobody directs him to where it is, as some people don't know where it is and others are in a hurry that they don't respond to his inquiry. Finally, he decides to sit down on the road-side and sell. Three men come to him and confiscate some of his mellons explaining to him that this is the rent for using the roadside. Then another group of people come along and confiscate the rest of the mellons as a fine for disturbing people. In the end, two men come to confiscate the remainder as payment of a fine for a felony he has committed, as they claim.

Left with nothing, Zafaran resorts to selling his mule to buy water to drink. One dinar only remains from the mule's price and Zafaran uses his dinar to write a complaint to the police director. His request is refused as he is unable to pay for the stamp. Zafaran resorts to sleep the night in a cemetery. In the morning he contemplates an idea that he will take a tax on every dead body to be buried, and he can thus make money. His practice is revealed when the Sultan's daughter dies and Zafaran claims the tax. The Sultan hears this, sends for him and Zafaran appears in the Sultan's court to see that the courtiers are the people who had taken away from him his millions. Zafaran tells his story to the Sultan and the courtiers are exposed. The Sultan, discovering that his courtiers are hypocrites and thieves, starts a campaign of total reformation in the country.

Before going into the details of the play, I must make a point that the playwright subtitled the play as a comedy. In fact, and as I realized during the performance, it is a serious play which has no room for joking in it. This is not to detract the play which indeed must be a serious one because, as we will see, its content has a tragic quality to a certain extent.

The playwright tries, on the surface, to keep the framework of the folktale from the point of view of the course of events, setting of time, the characters and their way of behavior in life, yet he could manipulate this folktale artistically to express through it issues that recur in all places at all times. It is a commonplace practice of authors and poets to go back to history drawing upon it their subject-matter, be it real historical events, legends, myths, and whatnot. By doing this, they can tackle problems that preoccupy them by means of symbolism or allegory in order to instruct the audience morally. In other words, events and episodes in drama are symbolic means by which the dramatist expresses himself concerning some issues that preoccupy him.

As it was evident during the performance, the play's incidents and events are straightforward from the viewpoint of their primary significance. It is, in the first place, a symbolic play as well as a play of ideas.

Zafaran's character, the play's protagonist, as portrayed by the playwright- whether deliberately or otherwise- is a simple flat character, and as much as he is good to the extent of naivety, he is a symbol of the conscientious hard working person who is useful to his community. In spite of the role the playwright gives to this character, specially after Zafaran's move to the city, the image which the playwright has given to him does not fit well with the role the playwright intends for him. The conflict, therefore, comes out lukewarm throughout the play because this character does not develop in the course of the play, but remains naïve. Such a



character, of course, cannot, with such simplicity and naivety, tackle issues which would eventually lead to a dramatic conflict. Thus, we could notice that the conflict remains static and stable throughout the play, although there are some situations where the conflict could have been intensified, as in the dialogue between Zafaran, the police chief and the Sultan. The playwright is not successful altogether in his portrayal of Zafaran to play the role he is assigned to play, especially if we were to consider that Zafaran here is a sort of an objective correlative or a symbol of the people and who represents goodness, generosity and contentedness. At the same time however, Zafaran could be a victim of opportunists and self-seekers. I have no doubt that this is the playwright's intention. The mellons could be nothing but an objective correlation or symbol of any country exposed to pillaging and plundering and blackmailing in different ways. Then, what is the playwright's intended meaning by the variety of colours of the clothes, of the figures who block Zafaran's way and take away from him his mellons? Does the playwright aim at portraying the different ways of blackmailing? Or does he symbolise by this the variety of these ways? Indeed, I tend to embrace the former possibility although I don't reject the latter altogether as it could be feasible.

There is another point of which I should stop at as it has its deep significance in the play and by this I mean Zafaran's taking to the cemetery. Although he resigns to accept his situation at the cemetery, this acceptance suggests despair and escapism from reality as well as from the forces of aggression. The playwright, on the other hand, uses this incident as a starting point for challenge and confrontation. From the graves of dead people struggle begins and from there comes the beginning of change which exposes hypocrisy, falsity and blackmailing and all other crooked methods of selfishness. Here appears the true life that man should lead: a life dominated by justice, freedom and away from hypocrisy, blackmailing and self-seeking.

This is reminiscent of Badr Shakir AL-Sayyab's situation in his famous poem "The Grave-Digger" when the grave-digger is eager for wars and destruction so that there will be more corpses which means more business for his livelihood.

O, Lord, as long as perish is the living's end  
Command that they would die tonight  
I die of thirst and hunger.  
Have nor some died tonight?  
So send death before dark!  
O, Lord, a week has passed as long as a year  
The grave is empty, opening its mouth waiting, waiting.

I still dig it and it is covered with dust.<sup>19</sup>

The spirit of revenge, however, towards the community is so tense and acute in Al-Sayyab or his protagonist, the grave-digger. He despairs of change and reformation and he returns to his cemetery from the inn of wine and entertainment which is a symbol of the community. He keeps dreaming of going back

And the grave-digger keeps  
Distancing from the new grave  
Stumbling, dreaming of company and wine.<sup>20</sup>

The protagonist of Al-Mannai's play overcomes false reality from between the corpses. From there begins the reformation wished and aimed at by the playwright. This, in fact, is a turning point in Al-Mannai as we find in most of his plays that goodness is finally defeated and justice is lost as in *Ommul-Zain*, *O, Money* and other plays, unlike this play.

Among the most prominent characteristics of this play in addition to what we have previously noticed is that the playwright could get rid of all sorts of exaggerations which some playwrights resort to for the sake of propagating their works and force out laughter, no matter how superficial, from the audience. The playwright, besides, could transcend these wornout themes which some playwrights have restricted themselves to, such as high dowry, family problems, teenagers' behaviour and other themes that have been treated superficially and naively in most of these plays.

Al-Mannai's vision is represented by his standpoint toward some of the traditional customs that dominate the community and the ensuing consequences of materialism brought about by modern urbanisation and civilisation and which have dominated all the moral values of the past. This vision is recurrent in most of his previously-mentioned plays. We can also find them in this play through many situations and scenes among which are that dialogue between Zafaran and the old man he meets of his way. He asks him about his dwellings and whether his domicile is in that jungle, and the old man replies, "It is you who live in the jungle, I live in nature." This is intensified by the old man's warning of Zafaran concerning the city.

We needn't emphasise this point as it is conspicuous enough when Zafaran comes to sell his mule in order to buy water with its price. By means of all of these situations, the playwright

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<sup>19</sup> Al-Sayyab, *Collected Poems*, P 546

<sup>20</sup> Ibid, P. 562

intends to condemn materialism or the city community with all its disadvantages and the domination of material values over people's lives. I can summarise my observation about this play by saying that the playwright was somewhat successful in manipulation this folk tale and he could put life into it and could thus get closer to life in its lived reality. The actions portrayed by the playwright expressed the issue he wanted to tackle by means of allegory and symbolism.

The playwright was not, however, successful in the characters' portrayal as most of the characters in the play are restricted in their movements and could not contribute to add new dimensions to the consequences of the external events. This, on its part, led to, as I have already mentioned, the non-intensity of the dramatic conflict in the play, and it thus affected the level of the dialogue which comes out simple and ordinary, not heightening to the degree of crisis and confrontation. This could be interpreted that the playwright in his artistic structuring of the play did not try to develop this structure but committed himself, to a great extent, to the folk tale's framework, not only in the depiction of events but he also committed himself in the portrayal of the characters and their ways of dealing with reality, and I made this clear in my discussion of the character of Zafaran.

It suffices to say that this play, nevertheless, could be considered a new brick to be added to the building of the Qatari theatre which is in a great need for more efforts like this in order to keep abreast of life, observing it and then work toward developing it.

Saleh Al-Mannai's *The Little One and the Sea* makes use of the previous play's intellectual dimension, that is to say, the state of alienation and the inability to cope with the city which represents change, shift and loss of values. Besides, *The Little One and the Sea* condemns the past and the community, and it also rejects all materialistic values, as these ruin utterly man's values and man's humanity.

#### *The Little One and the Sea* and Suffering in the Past

The theme of diving forms a dramatic material usually represented in that dramatic conflict between the nokhtha, the ship captain and the divers and the sailors working in their different classes on board of the ship.

Most authors in the Gulf area have made use of this issue as a subjective-matter for many stories and plays. Naturally, this subject-matter can be treated dramatically, I mean it is of the tragic type because it carries or reflects the injustice inflicted on the divers by the nokhthas. This somewhat instant dramatic material has been manipulated by playwrights as I have just mentioned and the method of treatment differed from one playwright to another.

each according to their dramatic and artistic gifts as well as their absorption of this folkloric material. Some playwrights merely copied directly this material and formulated it in the shape of dramatic dialogue, and thus these playwrights could do no more than document a reality that actually existed. Most of these plays, therefore, lack the vitality of action and the force of conflict, as the playwrights don't give them their feelings, emotions and the age's concerns, which things that put into this material the spirit that enlivens the audience's emotions.

Some came across this subject of diving, with all its implication of pain and suffering, and could revive this subject once more in their plays by means of their own insights and their age's concerns and consciousness to the extent one feels, while watching this play or that one, as if he were living that tragedy dramatised on the stage, and thus one interacts with it and sympathises with its characters and feels unhappy about their sufferings and endurance .

This, as I have already pointed out, is achieved when the playwright is able to put into this subject life anew. And once this is achieved, the play places itself in its proper artistic framework.

We return to Saleh Al-Mannai's *The Little One and the Sea* to consider how it draws its material from that suffering and that conflict initiated by the community of divers with all its values and traditions and the resultant tragedies and sufferings endured by a wide class in the Gulf community. The play revolves round, or better still to say that the dialogue between Khalid and Hamad revolves round after their long voyage of agony or struggle against death in consequence of an accident of drowning in which Khalifa, Hamad's nephew was victimised, then the waves threw away Hamad and Khalid on an uninhabited island where a dialogue between the two characters ensues. Hamad recollects his tragic memories and how his father was victimised by the community.

This play which consists of one act with two characters, suffers from low levels of the spirit of conflict and dramatic action. This is perhaps due to what I have already mentioned that it is not sufficient that the treated theme is dramatic to achieve in the play the conflict's intensity and vitality, but what it is necessary for the playwright is to give an artistic treatment to this conflict through his feelings and vision of life, in addition to the mixing of historical events and his age's issues, problems and concerns in order to intensify even more this conflict so as to make the audience interact with it.

Despite the realism of the theme which the playwright treats in this play and the characters' realism as well, the playwright has alienated the situations and based the dialogue on narrating

past suffering. This flashback in time has undoubtedly so weakened the movement of the conflict that past tragedy becomes the pivot round which the two characters' dialogue revolves in this play. I mean by this the suffering endured by Hamad's father and how he was victimised by the dive community where the nokhtha forms absolute power that dominates individuals' destinies.

Hamed : They've killed him.

Khalid : Who?

Hamad : The superiors.

Khalid : I don't understand.

Hamad : You never will. They forced him to dive into the depths of the sea .. to bring them the good things of the sea.. but he never came back to us.

Khalid : Why did they force him?

Hamad : To pay them past debts.

Khalid : What ...debts?

Hamad : They came back carrying his bed to my mother.

Khalid : To your mother?

Hamad : Before going out with them on that bleak day on which the captain knocked our door and forced him to go.. my mother tried to stop him.. but she couldn't... he had to choose between death or scandal. I remember him telling her confidently that he wasn't going to come back.<sup>21</sup>

This tendency in dealing with the dialogue and the flashback to describe the past and to be elaborate in this description led to weaken the conflict's intensity, and the conflict itself turned into pure thought as it negated the two sides of the conflict on the ground of reality. As a result to that, the confrontation which is the basis of all dramatic conflict vanished.

No doubt, in the drama of ideas or mental drama the intensity of the dramatic conflict goes down and is replaced by intellectual dialogue and the stirring of ideas and issues instead of physical or emotional conflict. Reality and time have become here abstract meanings and they represent the other side that faces Hamad's character. This character, as a matter of fact, complains of past suffering without the ability to face up to reality as Hamad refuses to go back to the village because he feels estranged. This is reminiscent of Marnoosh in Tewfiq Al-Hakim's *The Cave People* when he refuses to go back and live in that strange reality after waking up from the long slumber. The similarity between these two situations lies in that they

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<sup>21</sup> Saleh Al- Mannai, *The Little One and the Sea*

both spring from a reaction to a reality that has passed but is still on-going in the present's depths, and there is, therefore, no hope for reconciliation and co-existing.

Since we are associating these two situations in Al-Hakeim's and Al-Mannai's plays despite some disparity in attitudes and artistic structures, we could say that in the drama of ideas, due to its artistic structure, the dramatic conflict weakens. This is due, as it has already been mentioned, to lack of concrete confrontation on the ground of reality. It is a text to be read more than to be performed on stage. This has been emphasised by Tewfiq Al-Hakim in his preface to his *Pygmalion* as he considered this type of drama to be read not to be performed. It is due to this that his *The Cave People* failed on stage according to what he said later, "I saw what I was doubtful about, i.e., this work is not at all good for performance on stage, or at least not the sort of stage performance people are used to, as the actors show situations and issues not like what is usually performed on stage to achieve emotional excitement. That night I left the theatre and I was doubtful about my work, believing that people were right because theatre is a place where an audience would watch a conflict that would arouse its interest and appeal to its emotions: a bloody conflict between a shield and another, between a bull and a man, between one emotion and another, but what would it feel towards the conflict between man and time, man and place and man and his faculties".<sup>22</sup>

Naturally, in the drama of ideas, the characters' dimensions shrink in their physical conflict, yet the character's mental conflict or inner drama must have a concrete dimension we discover through its dealing with its surroundings. But Al-Mannai couldn't depict its psychological dimensions, as the total situation is abstract and the action is characterised by monotony and flatness.

Besides, the play consists of one act and its characters are limited and this could affect the conflict's intensity and the action's crystallisation and development, especially that Khalid, the second character in the play is an inactive character somehow, i.e., he doesn't contribute to the action's intensification and development. From this standpoint we find that the play is closer to the spirit of narrative fiction which is based on interior monologue and introspection in those reminiscences which Hamad recollects from the past.

The play, however, doesn't altogether lack scenes with a mental or psychological dimension which the playwright presents through the casual dialogue but which has depth and significance. What is this western village? What does fearing it mean for Hamad? Why is

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<sup>22</sup> Tewfiq Al-Hakim, *Pygmalion*, p. 11

he a stranger in it? What is the type of this estrangement? What made Hamad make that decision against that village (community) ?

This is a basic issue aroused by the play with a quick gesture. This issue ensued as a result of those hardships endured by Hamad and how the community rejected him after kidnapping his father from him and then persecuting his sister by forcing her to marry an old man to pay off a debt imposed on them by circumstances.

Sense of alienation in Arabic literature is as old as this literature is, as it was evident in Al-Saaleeg tramp-poets of the pre-Islamic era, Al-Jahiliyah. These poets felt they were strangers in their own families or tribes. This sense of alienation came as a result of these poets' sense of injustice, persecution and loss of rights. Here is the Jahili poet Al-Shanfari Al-Ozdi sensing injustice and persecution and his people's failing him, and so he decides to leave and be a stranger in other lands. He feels that his people and tribe are no longer his people and tribe. He feels, instead, that the desert and its beasts are closer and more sympathetic to him than his people :

I shall leave you, my people, and go away  
To others towards whom I feel inclined.  
The earth is not too small for a man with a will and purpose.  
There is enough room for the honest  
And I have found kinship with strange tribes.<sup>23</sup>

Besides alienation of place there is alienation of time and psychological alienation which he as well as a large number of writers and poets experience, and this aspect is recurrent in the modern age as reflected in a number of poets and writers due to injustice and persecution and the cultural shift and the psychological, intellectual and social crises and conflict which accompanied them. Although living amidst his own community, man would feel alienated if he felt any imbalance in values and justice. This is the psychological alienation felt by many a contemporary poet.<sup>24</sup>

The alienation dramatised in Al-Mannai's play conflict could be that alienation which Hegel meant by calling it personality alienation which comes as a result of the conflict between what is subjective and what is real. Intellectual alienation is a result of the loss of identity when a person is dominated by another person's authority.

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<sup>23</sup> Dr. Mahmood Hassan, *Al-Shanfari*, p.125

<sup>24</sup> Mahir Hassan Fahmi, *Nostalgia and Alienation in Modern Arabic Poetry*

It suffices to say that this play is a good work and effort. It is especially important to mention that this play is written in classical Arabic which so many playwrights avoid due to the question of realism and other groundless justifications.

### **Night ,O, Night**

This play is a new brick to be added for the sake of establishing a Qatari theatre. It wouldn't be an overstatement if I said that this play is Al- Mannai's masterpiece from the viewpoint of dialogue and verbal vitality. On the other hand, certain elements affect this play's depth and seriousness. Among these affecting elements are : the play's title which lacks the force and attractiveness that go with the play's serious and vital intellectual content . This title Night, O, Night suggests that it is a musical show, but when seeing the play the spectator, after realizing its true content, changes his impressions and finds himself in front of a play with profound thought and serious content characterized by richness, seriousness , vitality and modernity. The play's general framework suggests thematically that the play is a historical text with some dramatic implications where the conflict between good and evil gets tense and the playwright uses the past as a pattern to run this conflict, as he justifies all this by the relationship of the nokhtha, the ship owner, and the sailors and how the nokhtha determines the destiny of those who work for him . This is the play's superficial concept , but the play's deep structure deals with a far fetching theme which is that of freedom and justice as parallel to the question of dominance, injustice, opportunism and the sacrifice of values and principles for the sake of personal interests .

Abu Fallah, the ship owner and the man of power and authority represents injustice and he dominates people's destinies in the town where he lives. He doesn't allow anybody to travel, neither does he allow anybody to work and develop themselves. He, moreover, invests their money for his own interest and gives them money that is hardly enough for their living . He does so to keep them at bay and make them feel that they are in need of him.

Abu Jabbar : As long as Abu Fallah is the landlord, we are helpless. He is the reason of our unemployment.

Muftah: Lower your voice. [ Pointing at Sbat]

Mubark: What is to be done ? Abu Masood is not satisfied with us.

Muftah : And we are not satisfied with ourselves But we can't help it. All boats and vessels are Abu Fallh...and he has the right to determine the moment of departure.



Mubarak: Two months are gone and we haven't been to the sea.

Abu Jabbir :Since we eat and drink and get half of our wages, why should we complain?

Mubarak :Yes, but our morsel is dipped in humility. How long are we going to be like this from dawn to dusk and we are in this café ?<sup>25</sup>

This negative stand which the villagers take makes Abu Fallah manipulate their silence and cowardice to have control over Farha, the waterman's daughter, whom he takes by force from her father while everybody looks on without any resistance. Abu Fallah's possession of Farha is symbolic of the liquidation and confiscation of freedom

Mubarak : Let them all know that the one who stole Farha can steal from them their daughters and do even more than that for the humiliated morsel he gives them.

Farha here is a symbol of ravished freedom and that is why we find out that she forms the basic pivot for other characters' conversation and dialogue at the time when the playwright absents her from the scene of events. This is a good point on the playwright's part for this serves the artistic structure of the play, and Khames the waterman represents the diligent grudging man who works for the others.

Abu Masood : Our work is to think. We want to explain to people that this village won't be happy without Farha, daughter of Khames the waterman. If we considered the waterman to be a symbol of freedom, would it be possible to say that Farha and the playwright's attempt at proving that she is the waterman's daughter is an emphasis of the freedom she seeks for them?

Abu Saood that Abu Saood, that reforming preacher and rebel against injustice is accused by Abu Fallah and his associates of madness because he calls the villagers for work and not to submit to the humiliation and domination forced on them by Abu Fallah.

The reformer or preacher is a prototype character in a number of Al-Mannai's plays<sup>26</sup>. We find Abu Saood is a weak character in its intellectual make-up and its role on stage from the point of view of dialogue, despite the result that comes out of this play.i.e., the triumph of good and the emergence of the beginnings of change which the reformer always called for.

The playwright always tried to reveal some perverse behavior and dramatise those negative aspect in the life- style of some human prototypes. Personal and opportunistic interests

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<sup>25</sup> Abdul- Rahman Al-Mannai, *Night, O, Night*

<sup>26</sup> Such plays as *Rest of the Will, Al-Zain's Mother*, etc..

control many of the play's characters and then the voice of living conscience is gone, for when Mubarak takes Abu Saood's side, he doesn't do so out of belief in a principle or defence of justice but because he is ruled by a personal interest which is his love of Farha whom he finds that Abu Fallah has taken possession of .

A summary trial is arranged by Abu Fallah to look into the case of taking the girl to him. We find that everybody give their testimony in the interest of the aggressor Abu Fallah. They are driven by their fear for their personal interest , whereas we find the waterman stand speechless seeing that the entire community is against him and justifying his daughter's rape.

The pivot round which the play revolves is the independence of decision- making and freedom of position-taking when the decision-maker is unable to make a living for himself freely .

Abu Fallah : All of you , sit down as I seek nothing except your interest, and to tell a friend from a foe so that you understand that goodness does not come except from those who are good . Come on , Sbat, see what the men want .

The playwright rejects this situation because it is a result of laziness and laxity of the people . Change should come from within themselves. We find the same situation repeated by the playwright in his other play, *A Black Smith's Tale*, where he concentrates on the theme of the spirit of dependence and laxity which leads to subordination. This weakness in the characters' realism made the playwright ignore the characters of Mubarak and not use it as a means to agitate the conflict between Mubark and Abu Fallah about their love of Farha because the conflict here is unfair and that is why the playwright doesn't manipulate it artistically. The initiatives of change and awakening, however, being to emerge and grow in the course of the development of the main plot. By this I mean Abu Fallh's excessiveness and his possession of the girl Farha which thing that leads some villagers to reject this reality and the play closes with the burning of Abu Fallah's ships, and this is an end where right , justice and freedom prevail over persecution and injustice. The burning of the ships is an inspection of the destruction of the means of injustice which had enabled Abu Fallah to control the villagers.

There is a final note on the play which is related to language. Most of Al- Mannai's plays are written in the vernacular and he first wrote this play in the vernacular, but later he wrote it in classical Arabic, and it is a work worthy of it is salt. There are nonetheless, certain stylistic and structural errors which Al- Mannai will hopefully avoid in the future. But still, these linguistic minor defects do not at all undermine the play as a whole. The play remains among the best plays in its artistic structure.

## **THE PELTERS AND THE DOCUMENTARY THEATRE**

I read the text of Ghanim Al-Sulaiti's play The Peleters a long time ago before it was performed on stage. Then later I saw it performed on stage in Qatar after it had participated in the Carthage Festival in Tunisia in 1985 and it won two prizes. Despite the popular success of this play, I have certain remarks to make which remained the same whether when reading the play as a text or watching it performed on stage. From the outset, I say that Ghanim Al-Sulaiti has proved himself in each work he presented that he is an efficient actor and he was brilliant in playing the role of Masood in this play. Regarding him as a playwright, I have certain points to raise about him.

The play's main idea is about the national tragedy suffered by the Arab community, i.e., the differences and contradictions that dominate the Arab community, and the negative reflections of these problems and differences on the individual and community as a whole. The playwright deals with this national issue in a comic and sarcastic manner charged with bitterness and grief in his attempt to create illusory atmospheres from the viewpoint of place, time and names to arrange events and abrade the documentary reality! Wonders' Wonders' empire consists of a number of states each of which has a ruler and all of which are at conflict with each other that at times reaches the point of waging war without any obvious reasons for that. Each state is at differences with its neighbors and the bedia war (pelting) is ongoing among them. Al- Hibal state and its ruler Dundan and Al- Jibbal state and its ruler Sharkan emerge as a sample of this continuous conflict between these states. The individual's suffering in this conflict is dramatized as a number of human types, but, as we shall see later, they are pale types such as the character of Masood who has casually and naively entered the borders of another state looking for this camel, and then he is arrested and accused of spying and entering the country illegally as he is a citizen of the Al- Jibbal state which is at conflict with this state. After interrogation, torture and imprisonment, he returns to his village where he faces the same dilemma of interrogation torture, and imprisonment of being accused of spying and treason, too. There is the character of the mother who comes looking for her son who has disappeared without her knowing anything about his destiny. There is also the character of the young man who looks for his father who has disappeared mysteriously, for his father used to live in Al- Jibbal village and work in Al- Hibal village but when conflict arose between the two villages' rulers, the father disappeared never to return ! Besides these types who represent people's suffering in both states, we find the rulers phrase out speeches to delude people with false promises :

Shirkan : You, the people of Al- Hibal village are unlike the peoples of the rest of the world. You are shining gold .You are glittering pearls. Prosperity is underway, coming to you bit by bit, you the sweetest of all peoples of the entire globe .

The same situation is repeated in the other state, where promises are lavished on people, and threats about the ruler of the other state are declared. Besides this character we find the character Dho-al-Makan is a symbol of the people's conscience, and the name Dho-ol-Makan which means the light of the place has its own symbolic significance. There is also another character, Ifraidoon, sage of Al- Noor state who comes in the reconciliation between the two states but in actual fact he intends to widen the gap of conflict between the two sides, and to sell weaponry to them .

In Act Two most of these characters disappear and the act includes the rulers only when they meet to review the situation and remove differences between them, , but the session ends, and the play ends as well, and differences still stand.

### **Dramatic Structure and the Documentary Element :**

Undoubtedly, the issue dealt with by the play is an issue that is consciously and sentimentally associated with every Arab's conscience. From this stand-point, an Arab audience is ready to interact with the issue. But this interaction varies in degree and intensity and this depends on the playwright's method and ability to excite and make the audience interact emotionally and intellectually. In any dramatic work there is the development of the action and this is the best method to achieve effectiveness on the audience and the interaction between stage and house. Could the playwright Ghanim Al- Suliti in The Pelters make use of these elements and deepen the spectator's stance towards this national issue dealt with in his play ? Does this surpass the real realization felt by the spectator before he enters in the world of this artistic work ? There is a number of questions to be asked before we enter the process of analysis and shedding light on some aspects of this dramatic text. It was also clear to us through the summary that the play's idea is of the stereotype sort, and from here we find the playwright depends on this aspect and is concerned with ideas or issues that have political dimensions and dramatized them in a shallow documentary manner without trying to reconstruct artistically this reality. It is known that the artistic work is not a documentary version of reality, i. e., the play or any other artistic work is not a direct reflection of reality but it is an artistically creative process of this reality with an artistic vision which has seriousness, pleasure and effectiveness, and as Victor Hugo says : " Drama is a mirror on which nature is reflected,

but if this mirror was with a flat surface it would only reflect a pale image of things : it is accurate but colorless . It is known that colour and light are lost in the simple flat reflection, and drama, therefore, should be a lens mirror for instead of reflecting the image palely and faintly, it should condense the colorful ray to send it into light, and from light to make a flame. Only then can drama be rightfully considered art .”<sup>27</sup>

As a matter of fact, the direct documentary mode in dealing with reality has affected negatively the artistic and aesthetic aspects, although the playwright somehow tried to alienate this reality by resorting to a kind of an illusion through his unspecification of the nature of the settings of time and place as well as his use of names with caricaturist dimensions for villagers such as Al- Hibal, Al- Jibbal, Al- Thahab, Al- Fidha which mean respectively Ropes, Montains, Gold, Silver, and characters such as Shirkan, Dindan, Raggas, Lamma which mean respectively Accomplice, Lutanist, Dancer, and Shiner. The play’s direct tendency in presenting the issue wasted, however, the dramatic and artistic aspect conspicuously. This is due to the playwright’s over enthusiasm for the idea which made him present the issue with a shallow and commonplace vision without deepening its dimensions. The artist’s responsibility is to realise the quintessence of life or the dramatic aspect of it, and therefore he doesn’t reflect reality as it is but he selects certain incidents to make up a new image of things

Because of this close treatment, dramatic rhythm is absent in the play’s overall structure, and thus the character with its psychological and social dimension’s diminishes, which could have otherwise been a pattern that carries a collective suffering, given that Massod- who symbolizes the Arab individual’s dilemma that tears him to pieces psychologically and spatially- is available for the playwright to make out of it a tragic drama which could grow, develop, and be expressive about the inner conflict lived by this individual in this situation which the playwright tried to dramatize in his sarcastic style. The playwright, however, couldn’t make use of this situation due to the absence of analytic vision or insight in portraying the character and the search for its psychological and social dimensions. This made the characters flat with no motives which engender and develop external conflict. It is well known that playwrights don’t care about physical events as much as they do about motives and their psychological outcome and the conflict they cause. In this respect Dr. Abdul-Qadir Al-Qit has written : “ In drama, physical events are not intended for their own sake no matter how significant in life they are . For a good playwright they are a means by which the playwright reveals the innermost

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<sup>27</sup> Victor Hugo, quoted in Izzul-Deen Ismail, *Human Issues in Contemporary Literature and Drama*. p.28

essence of the human psyche and shows the reality of human society in the shape of an artistic image that is able to amuse and excite consciously and intellectually. A playwright, therefore, often does with the least difficult actions of physical life and doesn't make his play elaborate to an extent that distracts his audience's attention away from realizing the psychological and sociological meaning that could emerge through the treatment of that event and showing it in a successful artistic way."<sup>27</sup> It suffices to say that most of the characters have taken parallel courses that they hardly interact with each other and this caused their isolation and the absence of cohesion. We find, therefore, a total separateness between Act One and Act Two – a thing which led some critics, to consider that each act is independent from the other.<sup>28</sup> Could it be said that Ghanim Al-Sulaiti used here the sketch technique which is based on the show of a number of characters like what happens in reportage.

When we consider some of these characters and the way the playwright portrayed them we will find that behavior, conversation and manners are what determine situations, and they are the means to portray the characters and to reveal their psychological and social motivation. The playwright, indeed, was somehow successful in portraying some of the rulers, for Hendhel tends towards violence and trouble – making .

Hendhel : I've said my word and won't change it and I shall hold a Meeting so that I won't be criticized for this situation but make no mistake about it that I've come to the meeting in order to have differences and I insist on these differences and I shall not leave the meeting table and return to my country till I have differed with one of them and assaulted him. I am attending the meeting to beware you of consequences when I am assaulting. I won't be less than any ruler in the empire. They are all alike except me. Why ? Was I given suckling by a goat, or am I a ruler in a different empire?<sup>29</sup>

Raqqas, ruler of the merry village is a pattern of the weak character who is also careless and indifferent to what is going around him, and he lives in his own world.

Raqqas : I don't know if they entered, if I entered. I did see them disperse, I dispersed, too. I like movement, beautiful movement . They look nice while they are moving together...soft... they look soft and we do like softness and hate war. I for one, instead of buying a weapon I buy a tabor, drum, a flute, a lute. I am not an oppose.

Emperor : Wonderful ! Go then and attend the meeting.

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<sup>27</sup> Abdul-Qadir Al-Qit, *From Literary Arts*, p. 16

<sup>28</sup> *Al-Raya* daily newspaper, 12February, 1986

<sup>29</sup> *The Pelters*, p. 26

Raqqas : Attend the meeting! I have no objection. But if they stood up I would stand up, if they sat down I would sit down ,I am with them.<sup>30</sup>

The playwright depicts most of his characters of the rulers by depending on the declamatory tone and the direct revelation of the characters' tendencies. The best-structured character is perhaps Masood as mentioned already but the playwright neglects him and so he finishes off in the first act. Perhaps the playwright tries to find an alternative in the group that represented the people from inside the auditorium and by shouting slogans it expressed its sufferings and demands. But the gap is huge between this and that, for the latter cannot enkindle the conflict through slogans of protestation. We therefore find that he couldn't build up the confrontation and conflict in the play.

There is nonetheless, one character who is Dhoa- al-Makan who is ruler Shirkan's senior clerk who refuses to betray his conscience in obeying the ruler. He, therefore, refuses to write swearing and pelting speeches against the ruler's enemies for he finds no justifications in these hostilities. Says he:

I used to live shattered between my job's demands and my mind's demands. It is a matter of two phrases : one on a sheet of paper and one which pounds my thought with my conscience's hammer ... to give me insomnia ... to pull me inside out ...why ? I don't know ... I only want you to know, Shirkan, that since today I am not going to use my pen for nothing ... No, never. [ He takes his pen out, and breaks it, then throws it away].

The playwright made this play a symbol of honesty and clean conscience, and he touches upon the psychological aspects and motives slightly. And undoubtedly, his choice of the name Dhao -al- Makan ( the place's light) is emphatic of the content or role that the playwright intends the character to express or represent.

There is yet another character whom both the playwright and the director were successful in portraying and manipulating in this play, and this is Ifraidoon who plays the mediator who has come from the country of light in order to reconcile the rulers. Ifraidoon is the symbol of foreign intrusion and that is why the playwright makes him speak with an accent. Ifraidoon works diligently to promote the spirit of rift among the citizens of the one and same nation in the name of support and assistance and keeping these countries interests. On the other hand, we find him offering the two rulers weaponry supplies. The playwright, as well as the director dramatized this infiltration successfully when Ifraidoon is made commander of the popular

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<sup>30</sup> *The Pelters*, p. 26

brigade which presents a show of folklore songs and ballads. It is ironic that a troupe conducted by a foreigner gives shows of national songs and dances ! This is an image of cynical sarcasm by means of which the playwright wants to condemn the political situation. Indeed, the nature of the documentary theatre which is concerned with issues and situations, often diminishes the importance of dramatic structure and the characters, as well as the development of characters and all the accompanying changes of situations and conflicts. As it has just been mentioned, all this is due to the playwright's concern with giving images that reflect reality, and thus the character's role is no more than reflecting these images. From this angle, we could see the characters of the play to lack analytic depth and development.



## Conclusion

This study has been an attempt at monitoring some aspects in the theatrical movement in Qatar from the viewpoint of intellectual content and artistic structure. This is, as a matter of fact, a movement which is still at the beginning, but, however, is trying to take its position in the Gulf theatrical structure and I say Gulf for it is closer in its recent history , artistic structure, trends and themes. Theater is undoubtedly most attached to its milieu, and the Gulf community is united by its population structure, social make- up, customs, traditions, and future aspirations. We are therefore not astonished to find that similarity but find instead a likelihood in a number of plays in their contents and themes. Indeed, many Kuwaiti, Bahraini and Qatari plays have for their major themes the sea and the Gulf man's relationship with it . We clearly see this in the dive community, especially the relationship of the nokhtha, the shipowner , with the sailors. This relationship is highly characterized by intense drama stemming from the conflict between the nokhtha's exploitation of the poor sailors and the sailors' sense of injustice. We find this image from a pivot in common among a number of plays as in Abdu-Rahman Al-Mannai's *Ommul-Zain* and *Night,O, Night* , Saleh Al Mannai's *The Little One and the Sea* and Musa Abdulrahman's *The Nokhtha's Daughter*. In Bahrain, we find plays such as Ibrahim Bu- Hindi's *If Time Obeyed you*, and Rashid Al-Maawda's *Seven Nights* <sup>31</sup> . In Kuwait, we find Mohammed Al-Nashmi's *Joy for Returning* Salim Al-Faqaan's *The Nokhtha*<sup>32</sup> and other plays which are similar in their themes and contents, sometimes even in their titles. Some of these plays take the initiative to treat reality by means of the playwrights' projections or by the discrepancies between the past and the present from the viewpoint of social values and familial relationship and whatnot.<sup>33</sup>

The swift shift in the Gulf community structure is common among the Gulf countries. From this standpoint we find that this issue or shift, and the positive and negative aftermaths accompanying it, have occupied a huge section in the Gulf theatre. The dramatic patterns are almost similar in their themes and characters in monitoring this reality and the ensuing intellectual and social conflict between two generations. The swift shift and the overnight cultural change created a sort of incapability to cope, as the generation of the fathers with the traditional and conservative culture couldn't accept every new thing easily, specially concerning

<sup>31</sup> Dr. Ibrahim Ghloom, *Theatrical Experience Phenomena in Bahrain* p.98

<sup>32</sup> Dr. Mohammed Hassan, *Kuwaiti Theatre Between Fear and Hope*, p. 188

<sup>33</sup> Dr. Mohammed Kafood, *Modern Qatari Literature*, see chapter five on theatre. See also Dr. Ghloom, *ibid*

customs, traditions and ways of living, whereas the generation of the children who have been brought up under modern culture and who can cope with oriental and occidental ways of living are more willing to accept this situation. This would naturally create a kind of conflict and some contradictions within the person himself coming as a result of these concepts and values. From this standpoint we could find a number of plays, which depicted this reality in the Gulf area. These plays indeed, monitor the conflict between the divergent cultural concepts and values lived by the Gulf individual. These conflicting concepts and values consequently have become a ready –made and seemingly accessible material for most playwrights in the Gulf’s various countries to dramatise the different aspects of intellectual and social conflict and the cultural confrontation. In Bahrain for instance, Rashid Al- Maaowda’s *AVssel that Broke* and Issa Al – Homr’s the *Empire of Bujsoom* and other plays reflect an image of this social conflict lived by the Gulf family between tradition and change.

In Qatar, the same image is repeated in many a play such as Mohammed Mabarak Al –Ali’s *Celibacy Club*, Abdullah Ahmed Abdullah’s *Spinster*, Abdul-Rahman Al –Mannai’s *O,Money* and other plays which use social paradoxes and cultural conflict as dramatic materials. The Kuwaiti theatre lives the same experience where the process of cultural change and the accompanying social paradoxes and social conflicts become a pivot for a number of plays such as Saqar Al- Rashood’s *The Big Claw* and *The Obstacle*,<sup>34</sup> Abdul- Aziz Al –Saree’s *Hunger* and *Whose is The Final Decision?*<sup>35</sup>. These and other plays share in common the depiction of the phenomenon of social change, the interaction of generations and the accompanying conflict and paradoxes which come as a result of the disparity between the concepts of the two generations. These are some of the principal pivots round which and within whose frameworks rotate the themes of many a Gulf play. At the same time these plays vary in their artistic structure, especially that most of the plays which dealt with the phenomenon of change represented the era of beginning for most of the region’s playwrights. Besides, most of the playwrights use the vernacular in these plays, and this is a point I have discussed in the introduction of this study. The artistic aspect in the process of dramatic structure is undoubtedly a matter which varies from one area to another, as well as it does from one playwright to another .

The theatrical movement in Kuwait can be the only mature and developed movement due to its longer comparative history and the concern with theatre since the early 1960s.

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<sup>34</sup> Dr. Mohammed Hassan Abdullah, *The Kuwaiti Theatre Movement*, p. 139

<sup>35</sup> I bid, p. 174

Besides, we find that the theatrical movement in this area did not restrict itself in its themes and issues to those three above- mentioned pivots as a common ground for the Gulf theater from the viewpoint of its issues and concerns. We find, instead, that the national, political and humanistic issues became the playwrights' concern in the area and this is what I pointed out when discussing above Ghanim Al- Sulaiti's *The Pelters* as an example for that in the Qatari theatre and this is more conspicuous in the Kuwaiti theatre.<sup>36</sup>

In the final analysis, the theatrical movement in Qatar is inseparable from the movement in the Arab Gulf region as it all stands on a common ground or common fundamental points from the stand point of its issues or themes. This is due to the similarity, likelihood and interaction on which stand the population structure and the economic and social make –up. This theatrical movement is after all similar in concentrating on the vernacular and the documentary vision, as well as it should not be forgotten that this movement in its beginning depended on incoming Arab expertise. Gradually, the phase of originality and locality began to take its course by depicting the past , monitoring the present and aspiring for the future in a process of interaction with and awareness of cultural changes,as well as the national and global perspective to which the Gulf community belongs.

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<sup>36</sup> Dr. M.M. Al-Suri, *Dramatic Literature in Kuwait*, unpublished Ph. D. thesis, College of Girls, University of Ain Shams, 1984

# List of Plays

This list includes most of the plays written in the vernacular except when indicated they are written in classical Arabic. All these plays are available in typed photocopies, i.e., unpublished, except *The Little One and The Sea* which was published in *Al- Doha* magazine and it is published in this study. I have selected this list, taking into consideration that the text is written by Qatari playwrights, thus excluding translated and Qatarised texts.

No	Playwright	Play	Date	Notes
1	Abdullah A. Abdullah	<i>Spinster</i>	1972	
2	Mohammed S. Al-kuwari	<i>He Who Obeys Loses</i>	Undated	
3	Ali Merza Mohmood	<i>Once Only</i>	1974	
4	Mohammed Mubarak	<i>From Above Take it Easy</i>	1975	
5	Khalifa Eid Al- Kubaisi	<i>Hidden Secret</i>	1977	
6	Sammi Al -Mannai	<i>Khamis in Paris</i>	1976	
7	Abdul-Rahman Al-Mannai	<i>The Trout</i>	Undated	
8	Abdullah A. Abdullah	<i>Mightiest of All</i>	1972	
9	Abdullah A. Abdullah	<i>Where To?</i>	1976	
10	Salim Majjid	<i>Drivers with M.A. s</i>	1982	
11	Adbul-Rahaman Al-Mannai	<i>O, Money</i>	1976	
12	Abdul- Rahman Al- Mannai	<i>Ommul-Zain</i>	1975	
13	Abdul- Rahman Al- Mannai	<i>The Singer and The Princess</i>	1978	
14	Abdul- Rahman Al- Mannai	<i>Rest of the Will</i>	1975	
15	Ghanim Al-Sulaiti'	<i>The Petlers</i>	1985	Classical Arabic
16	Abdul -Rahaman Al-Mannai	<i>Night ,O, Night</i>	1984	Classical Arabic
17	Saleh AL-Mannai	<i>The Little One and the Sea</i>	1984	Classical Arabic

18	Hamad Al-Rumaihi	<i>The Discussion</i>	1983	
19	Saleh Al-Mannai	<i>The Game</i>	Undated	
20	Abdul –Rahman Al-Mannai	<i>Like This, O, Zafaran?</i>	1983	
21	Khalifa Al-Sayyed	<i>Because of Long Absence</i>	1974	
22	Khalifa Al-Sayyed	<i>A Spectacle</i>	1976	
23	Abdul –Rahman Al-Mannai	<i>The Crime</i>	1978	
24	Ghaim Al-Sulaiti Ghanim	<i>Ghost House</i>	1974	
25	Marzoog Basheer	<i>The Fault is in Ourselves</i>	Undated	
26	Mohammed M. Al-Ali	<i>Celibacy Club</i>	1975	
27	Abdul –Rahman Al-Mannai	<i>Golden Shoes</i>	Undated	
28	Hassan Hassein	<i>The Three Paintings</i>	Undated	
29	Hassan Hassein	<i>The Big Love</i>	Undated	
30	Abdul –Rahman Al-Mannai	<i>He Who Laughs Last</i>	1983	
31	Nameless	<i>The Beauty of the Vest is in its Patch</i>	Undated	
32	Hassan Hassein	<i>Three To One</i>	1980	
33	Saleh Al- Mannai	<i>Ibtisam in the Dock</i>	Undated	
34	Musa Abdul-Rahman	<i>Doctor Abu-Alloos</i>	1971	
35	Musa Abdul-Rahman	<i>The Nokhtha's Daughter</i>	1969	
36	Musa Abdul-Rahman	<i>The Mulla's Daughter</i>	1968	
37	Musa Abdul-Rahman	<i>A Secretary is Required</i>	1971	

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# *The Little One and The Sea,*

*A one-act play by  
Saleh Al-Mannai*

## **CHARACTERS:**

-Hamad

-Khalid

## **SCENE:**

An island surrounded by the sea, with rocky heights. From upper middle stage two people come up and they look exhausted and wet as if they have been struggling against sea waves for a long time.

Hamad: O, I am about to die because of exhaustion .

Khalid: Let us go up quickly.

Hamad: Where are we?

Khalid: On an island.

Hamad: What has happened?

Khalid: A storm blew on us and sank the boat we were on.

Hamad: O,yes, now I remember ....it was a cruel severe storm.

Khalid: And we swam till we got to this island ....thank God.

Hamad: We swam? No.... we were carried by the current.

Khalid: Yes,yes....Don't talk too much for, I need to rest a little bit so that I can think of what is going to happen . How to get out of this muddle.

Hamad: I feel I can't move my shoulders.

Khalid: Yes, the waters were strong and we swam a long distance till we got here .

Hamad: And where is he ?

Khalid: Who?

Hamad: Khalifa my nephew?

Khalid: Sunk into the bottom of the sea .

Hamad [Crying ] The bottom of the sea .[Goes on crying.] .

Khalid: Hush .Stop this noise. Let's think of some solution .

Hamad: Khalifa, my nephew.[Shrill cries.]

Khalid: I know that.... I know he is your eldest nephew.... And I know how much you love him, but will cries like these bring him back from the bottom of the sea ? Oh, no, if it wasn't your persistent wish to fish today, we wouldn't have fallen into this disaster .



Hamad: Was it my idea?.... Or ....?

Khalid: Shut up. Let's think.

Hamad: Think what? There is nothing to think about.

Khalid[Answering Hamad's question ]: How to reach the village before sunset.

Hamad: What am I going to say to my sister? To my brother-in-law, What shall I say?

Khalid : Stop wailing, and let me think for one moment.

Hamad: Think.... You think ....and I don't. Why?

Khalid: Think as you wish. The important thing is how to get to the village.

Hamad: The important thing is .... what am I going to say to my sister?

Khalid: This is not important.

Hamad: My thoughts are rambling in the dark bottoms of the sea.... O, Khalifa.

Khalid: The waves will carry him to the shore.... And they will know.

Hamad: Yes, the waters play with us as they wish.... And the fish eat our corpses.

Khalid: I told you to shut up.

Hamad: I want to talk.... Let me speak out my mind as I wish to.

Khalid: Your voice annoys me.

Hamad: Annoys you?

Khalid: It does.

Hamad: You want me to keep silent?

Khalid: Yes

Hamad: You hate me.

Khalid: Yes.

Hamad: And you wish you hadn't gone out with me?

Khalid: Yes.

Hamad: And you curse yourself because you came with me.

Khalid: Yes

Hamad: So what brought you with me?

Khalid: I ask myself that.

Hamad: Ask yourself? Wasn't it your idea?

Khalid: My idea!

Hamad: Your idea....It was you who asked me to go out today .

Khalid: I?

Hamad: Yes, and with persistence. Right?

Khalid: I,I? I dont remember a thing now.

Hamad: Don't pretend to forget.

Khalid: Let me think.

Hamad: I am scared.

Khalid: What?

Hamad: My whole being is full of fear.

Khalid: What of ?

Hamad: Don't you know what I am afraid of ? Can't you guess ?

Khalid: What ?

Hamad: It .

Khalid: What is it ?

Hamad: The village .

Khalid: The village ?

Hamad: Yes, I am afraid of it. I am afraid of my people ... it is people ... my whole being is full of fear.

Khalid: Strange ... Are they so frightening ? I don't feel like that .

Hamad: Because you are one of them .

Khalid: I don't understand .

Hamad: You don't have to understand ... My sister is also one of them ... and her husband ... that man who is over sixty years old ... that hawk who swooped over my young little sister ... that lovely dove ...to suck away her beauty ... and she is not yet twenty years old .

Khalid: What has your sister to do with us now ?

Hamad: The drowned is her only child ... she was warmed in the cold of a failed marriage ... without her consent ... an enforced marriage against her will .

Khalid: Fear .

Hamad: Fear of starvation ... of poverty ... of homelessness ... God's mercy on you, father.

Khalid: Your father... has been dead for ten years ... or more ...

Hamad: They killed him...

Khalid: Who did ?

Hamad: The superiors ...

Khalid: I don't understand .

Hamad: You never will ... They forced him to dive into the bottom of the sea ... to fetch its treasures ...but he never came back to us .

Khalid: Why did they force him ?

Hamad: To pay debts ...

Khalid: What debts ...?

Hamad: They came carrying his bed to my mother .

Khalid: Your mother...

Hamad: Before he went out with them on that bleak day when the captain knocked our door and forced him to go ... my mother tried to stop him but she couldn't ... as he was between two choices ... death or scandal ... I remember him saying to her and in his voice there was confidence that he would never come back. "Take care of the kids," he said, "I must go.. Never be weak . Take care of the kids . Be a mother to them as well as a father ... Don't let them go out to life unless you have prepared them to struggle against these hard times. Take care of the kids." My mother sat down to cry and wail ... She knew that my father was going by his own feet to his death..We too, sat down to cry like chicks under her arms. { He cries long and painfully. }

Khalid: What is the point of crying now ?

Hamad: To relieve myself ... Each time I remember that black day, I cry ...Ever since then my sister and I began to play games inside the house under mother's observation ... my mother who would often look at the horizon ... expecting my father's return .

Khalid: Quiet a little ... No need for memories. Let me think of a solution.

Hamad: { Going On } : Suddenly, the door was opened and a sailor, one of my father's companions, entered carrying my father's bed and said. "God have mercy on him." My mother shrieked ... the sky cracked by that shriek . She embraced my father's bed, and collapsed weeping silently until the sailor himself began to weep.

Khalid: It is so cold.

Hamad: We tasted cold and hunger together.

Khalid: Where is the way to the village ?

Hamad: We never knew the way to happiness.

Khalid: I see you are talking to me about the past .

Hamad: It was a happy past all the same. We would run after our mother like little chicks and she would be drudging for us .

Khalid:Do you hear me, Hamad ?

Hamad: I hear you, I hear the captain's voice when he dashed into our house to get us out of it ... or to pay my father debt.

Khalid: Do you hear me? You don't hear me .

Hamad: Mother sold everything she had ... everything except honor ... to keep to us that house but she couldn't ... A sailor, one of the captain's men, came to her proposing that she should marry her blooming flower to the old man, the dates – seller in return for paying the debts. Mother tried to refuse in the beginning ... she resisted ... but she surrendered finally ... and thus she married her little one to this wealthy old man .

Khalid: Call it a day about these stories about your father and mother and the dates – seller ...  
Let me think .

Hamad: Did you see your father dead ?

Khalid: I didn't .

Hamad: Didn't you cry ?

Khalid: I don't remember.

Hamad: Have you forgotten ?

Khalid: As any living person forgetting the dead.

Hamad: You have a heart of stone .

Khalid: My heart ...!

Hamad: Yes. You are from it...

Khalid: From what ?

Hamad: The village .

Khalid: But what is my fault ?

Hamad: You are all like this .

Khalid: Enough. Don't you want to shut up ... I am fed up with you ... fed up with your talking .

Hamad: No difference between you and them ... the same orders ... the same thing they do .

Khalid: You make me sick with your talking .

Hamad: And I get splintered by pain.

Khalid: I wish I knew .

Hamad: Know what ... what do you want to know ? Do you know about a child struggling against the waves without any hope of survival ?

Khalid: Time will pass and we are here ... Let's do something to get out of this damn island ... let's, before we run out of time .

Hamad: Time has no longer any value

Khalid: They are waiting for me now .

Hamad: And my sister is waiting for her little child.

Khalid: He is dead and that is all there is to it.

Hamad: You will see her tears on her cheeks... and she is crying with words to tear your heart to shreds.

Khalid: She'll cry in the beginning, then she'll forget.

Hamad: Because you don't see except what it is in yourself .

Khalid: And what do you mean, pray ?

Hamad: You know .

Khalid: The village ?

Hamad: Yes.

Khalid: Yes don't know it well.

Hamad: I know it ever since my birth ... I know it ... its little streets ... its harsh words ... it is hide-outs ... all of scandals. I know who owns everything ... who owns the water and the orders ... and we own nothing but obedience. I know it and with these hands I have wiped tears of those were lost in it .

Khalid: The sun will set and I only see you weeping .

Hamad: One ought to live like them .

Khalid: I want to live as I like .

Hamad: Not as my likes.

Khalid: What ?

Hamad: My likes are not like you .... You know how to live ..

Khalid: I didn't hear well.

Hamad: Because you hear nothing except your voice .

Khalid: What ?

Hamad: He hasn't yet understood the meaning of this word.

Khalid: You're strange.

Hamad: And she is now strange...lost ... all tears ... walking the streets like a mad woman ... looking in every place ... asking everybody, weeping ... crying ... asking about him ... about her little child ...who drowned .

Khalid: She will not see him .

Hamad: She will be seeing him with her eyes ... in the heart in every tear she will shed ... she will see him, talk to him and spoil him as she used to ... and she will talk about him to everybody who sees her .

Khalid: Hey ! You who are talking to yourself, haven't you done tormenting me ?

Hamad: Their same speech ... same behavior .

Khalid: I will go back alone

Hamad: Like them, exactly .

Khalid: You puzzle me .

Hamad: Get puzzled as you wish .

Khalid: Yes .

Hamad: The result is the same .

Khalid: What next.

Hamad: Where is he now ?

Khalid: I swear by God I am going nuts if you aren't really nuts .

Hamad: Because you don't understand a thing.

Khalid: Why did you bring him here with us ?

Hamad: Because he wanted that. He used to dream of it ... the sea ... to go and sail in the sea ...he got attached to me. He said: " Uncle , take me with you, I love the sea". There was pity in my heart for him." Take him with you, brother" my sister said to me, and I couldn't refuse her request.

Khalid: Then she is the responsible one .

Hamad: No, no.

Khalid: Who is responsible , then ? ... Me...? Take care you say that .

Hamad: [ Speechless.]

Khalid: The village is faraway . [ About to weep .] I want to go back .

Hamad: You shall go back , all right.

Khalid: And why not ?

Hamad: [ Interrupting ]: Because you can't ... you are unable to think ..

Khalid: Try with me ... let's think together ... to find a way out ... to go back. I want to go back ...[ He tries to go closer to Hamad ].

Hamad: Go back to your place . [ He pushes him ].

Khalid: [Collapses weeping ].

Hamad [ Extremely sarcastic ] : Don't worry ... they will look for you ... and they may find us ...

Khalid: Really ?

Hamad: And the story will start all over again ...

*Social and Intellectual  
Issues in Qatari Theatre*

## Introductory:

Undoubtedly, literary works are often a stance or a point of view of an artist or creative imaginative writer towards life or the society where he lives. Perhaps, drama and fiction are the two closest literary genres to life and reality, especially in contemporary life. In this study, I would like to discuss briefly the question of the literary work's creditability in expressing reality and its accuracy in this expression, or the range of individual and collective view point to the social issues dealt with by this literary work whether this literary work is an emperic document based on immediate objective observation to the extent that the author presents us with a true and objective image of the character's life he is dealing with. The answers to these questions could put critics and authors at cross-purposes, each according to their outlook at the literary work and its function, or the literary genre which expresses this issue.

There is, furthermore, another point or issue concerning the range of interaction between external (physical) reality and psychological reality or the experience lived by the artist, or the intellectual vision and stance taken by the artist towards the external milieu that surrounds him. Dr. Izzal-Deen Ismail has dealt with the question of relationship which links the self and the subject together.<sup>37</sup> I can say that this is applicable to the question I am dealing with here, i.e., that literary experience in drama is part of the cultural, social and traditional elements. By these elements I mean that one of them is external reality with all what it forms of the dimensions of conflict, contradictions, differences, similarities, conservativeness or change. Then the element is the intellectual dimension or vision or the artist's subjective viewpoint by which he presents his case. These two elements with their different implications and the ensuing mutual interactions lead up to literary experience. This experience varies from one person to another in its equilibrium between subjectivity and objectivity, between extreme emphasis on reality or abstraction of reality. Besides, this experience could be an ordinary one which captures reality and its daily problems and focuses on or reflects them as they are. We are going to find this in some Qatari dramatists, especially at the outset of dramatic writings through their handling of social issues or family issues. I think this type of literary or dramatic works could figuratively be called experience in its minute sense as it has already been mentioned above. If some think that in the dramatic work the subjective experience stemming from an internal subjective interaction with the external world where objectivity prevails over emotions,

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<sup>37</sup> Dr. Izzul-Deen Ismail, *Human Issues in Contemporary Dramatic Literature*, p.22



diminishes, we find, nonetheless, that the viewpoint adopted by the dramatist towards action or theme calls for the presence of a certain vision presented by the dramatist. This vision, however, should be the outcome of an interactive living and the conflict between the dramatist and his milieu, and then taking a certain stance. There is, on the other hand, a difference between the behavioral stance taken by a person in life and the artistic stance in a dramatic work. Says Dr. M.G., Hilal, "In practical life an individual faces reality with direct positive behavior where he fulfils his ego in its various relationships with the others and through them. In literature, the writer doesn't have to depict this situation as it is in reality to the letter. If he did so he would be a writer no longer. He must select events and people so that his work may suggest what he wants to say without necessarily being restricted by direct statement."<sup>38</sup>

This is perhaps what makes me say that the superficial treatment of social issues, themes and problems and expressing them directly is because the writer couldn't live the experience artistically so that he would be able to transform it, from its documentary realistic framework into an artistic reality where the elements of artistic work are so well mixed that they keep it away from spontaneous responses and the photographic mimicry of reality in a documentary manner. Artistic work, it should be remembered, is a matter of selecting, suggesting, exciting, and of conflict, tensions, concentration and a stance.

From this standpoint, I can say that in such works, experience diminishes and it perhaps lacks the artistic element beside the artistic vision which make the writer a person with an intellectual stance that characterizes his works no matter how many and various they are. This kind of experiences is, however, known to be incomplete because the writer's role here is restricted only to convey reality or to put together a number of problems or issues in the form of a dramatic dialogue. Says Eric Bentley, "Simple imitation will not provide a plot but the gap between life as raw as it is and life as it is in drama is so huge that we hardly think it can be bridged."<sup>39</sup>

In addition to that we find model experiences or dramatic experiences which are characterized by maturity and depth of treatment of issues dealt with by the dramatist who can, in this kind of drama, create from the raw material he adapts from reality a living artistic work which has seriousness and strangeness due to the transparent imagination that operates by innuendo and suggestiveness as the writer here with his numerous artistic means can create a new world of excitement, pleasure and surprise, and where there are conflicts, situations and

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<sup>38</sup> M.G. Hilal, *Literary Stances*, p.37

<sup>39</sup> Eric Bentley, *the Life of the Drama*, p.16

a tenuous and adequate link between the events and thoughts ongoing in the dramatic work. These elements cannot be present in an artistic work that depends on depicting reality as raw as it is and in a literal manner. Ideally, the targeted artistic experience is that one which absorbs the raw material of external reality and consequently melts then moulds, as it were, a new reality through which become clear the writer's vision and stance towards external reality. Prior to all that it should, nevertheless, be mentioned here that this new creation or creative work is, in general terms, associated with the element of aesthetics in addition to the purpose of depicting reality. No matter how opinions and schools of thought differ about the function and purpose of the artistic work, almost all parties stress the importance of aesthetics in the artistic work, as it is an important element in any artistic work, and this is why some would go even as far as beyond reality, even reject it, in order to achieve the artistic aspect in the creative work.

If we stop to consider social plays, we will not be able to ignore this cultural intermingling and the rapid social change that the Arab communities in the Arab Gulf area have witnessed and how all this affected the area in the outbreak of violent vibrations in the social tissues of these communities and the impact of all of this on the artistic and literary works in general and in the field of drama and fiction in particular. These changes, conflicts and social contradictions in values, customs inherited and incoming traditions are reflected in many a literary work, as the process of challenge and confrontation is powerful and acute. Naturally, raw dramatic material becomes available, or it even enforces itself on many writers especially in the field of the theatre.

Assuredly, the wave of change and the social, intellectual and psychological conflicts accompanying it should be reflected in dramatic works. It follows therefore that the theatre becomes an important tool to monitor the wave of change and the problems accompanying it and the social, intellectual and political issues ensuing from it. Moreover, the tendency to monitor these issues and problems becomes in many writers associated with a literally realistic vision, as already mentioned above. Consequently, the issues and problems that are apparent on the surface become the most important themes which have attracted dramatists ever since the embarkation of the theatrical movement in Qatar. If this present research concentrates on issues of the Qatari theatre, i.e., in an attempt at observing the intellectual content and themes these plays revolve round, it is inevitable to mention here two points before beginning analyzing some of these texts. First, I may resort to handling some play texts that do not aspire to the required artistic level in an artistic piece. I may, on the other hand, overlook this in order to be

able to consider the cares and issues of the Qatari theatre ever since its beginnings, as texts such as these represent the beginnings of the Qatari theatre, and they are undoubtedly the best evidence to observe the change movement and its accompanying tensions, anxiety and contradictions in the social structure for theatrical experience is, after all, an image of social reality, no matter how poor the artistic merit of these texts is.

Second, although I am convinced that some of these texts cannot persevere in front of artistic criteria, I will have some pauses through which I will discuss the text's artistic aspect or dramatic structure. Before dealing with these specimens, it is necessary to point out that the theatrical experience in Qatar, as it has already been mentioned above, is at the beginning of the road and therefore we shouldn't think that these humble experiences are an adequate image of the rapid social changes or keeping abreast with this change. If, furthermore, we added to that the fact that many dramatic texts are often based upon or adapted from Arabic or foreign texts, the adapted text would naturally remain somehow far away from the core of reality which the text should project or represent. From my readings of most of the dramatic texts that have been performed on stage ever since the emergence of the written dramatic text, I found that there are three pivots round which revolve most of these texts:

1. Issues of change and the accompanying conflicts, contradictions between prevailing values, customs and traditions, and the tendency towards change and innovation and the accompanying incoming values and ways of behavior. The cultural barrier and the disparity in attitudes between the conservative generation of the fathers and the enthusiastic generation of the children that has an itching for change and keep abreast with contemporary living become the most important issue that forms the play's dramatic subject.
2. The second pivot is family issues and the problems that ensue through relationships of family members, including polygamy, expensive dowries and children's perversion.
3. The third pivot is intellectual issues which include reality and national vision and the search for a better present.

## THE MOVEMENT OF CHANGE AND CLASH OF TRADITIONS

Perhaps the most important issue which has preoccupied dramatists and fiction writers in the area is the issues of change and the clash between the old and the new. The rapid social change was a natural result of the overnight economic change resulting from the oil flow in the area in the accompanying improvement in the standards of living of the majority of the population, or the sudden swift wealthiness of some. Opportunities like these engendered in youths or the new generation a strong desire to change and to accept new life styles and ways of behavior as a result of incoming cultural and social influences. We find at the same time that the generation of the fathers who grew in the laps of a conservative social life prevailed by customs, traditions and values that are rooted in a conservative Islamic Arab community rejects many of the incoming values and ways of behaviour. After the growth and development of education and due to cultural and intellectual communication among Gulf communities and other communities, the cultural gap began to form another dimension in the conflict of change between the two generations. This problem was a subject of a number of plays treated by some dramatists, directly, while by others it was treated marginally. Abdul Rahman Al Mannai's *Ommul Zain* was perhaps the most prominent play which represents this tendency in an attempt by the dramatist to depict that cultural jump from the dive and hunt community to the oil community, and the accompanying psychological and social changes coming as a result of the sudden economic shift. The problem tackled by the dramatist in *Ommul Zain* is how the spirit of materialism has changed people's psychology. Greed, selfishness and the spirit of the rat race have dominated people's behaviour and replaced faithfulness, fidelity and other values of the dive and hunt community. It follows consequently that the conflict of values and conduct have become the dramatic backbone of this play. The material change and economic development were accompanied by a change in people's behaviour and morality, as in Abu Rashid, the captain. In the disparities and contradictions that he reflects, we find an image of this transformation and change. On the other hand, in the times of dive and hunt, we find Abu Rashid represent those values and ideals such as fidelity and sympathy, for he looks after Hamad and Sharifa after their father's death in diving, and he finally adopts them and spends money on them as he does with his children. He, furthermore, dotes on that miserable man, Salem Al-Dukkal who has lost his arm at the sea and thus has become unable to work, and Abu Rashid would spend money on him. But when life changes and the times of dive and the sea are gone and the oil age takes over, we find that these moralities change in Abu Rashid who is the symbol of the community as a whole, as we find him distance Hamad and ask from

him a huge amount of money to let him marry his daughter Ommul Zain. After Hamad's going out to look for money, we find Abu Rashid marry his daughter off to a wealthy old man who has paid him bountifully. Undoubtedly, the selling out of Ommul Zain or marrying her off to this wealthy old man is a symbol of the selling out of values for the sake of materialism. Here becomes clear the materialistic attitude that has dominated this man that he sacrifices his daughter for material gains.

The second disparity which symbolizes change and the retreat of the past in front of the new life's rhythm is represented by Salem Al Dukkan's leaving his old life after he feels that he is no longer welcome by Abu Rashid. His exit is an indication of this change.

Mubarak: Even you, Salem, have left. Who remains? Truly, life changes fast<sup>40</sup>.

The question of belonging to the past and clinging to it forms Al Mannai's intellectual stance in this play, and perhaps this tendency and his keenness to emphasize the past with its values and traditions are what made him demonstrate his ideas in a direct oratorical manner:

(True, life has changed, but the one who forgets his past has no present...The time is gone when in the long winter nights we used to tell our little ones stories about the sea...O Ahmad, how can we forget half of our life time.!)<sup>41</sup>

The dramatist uses this problem of cross purposes represented by the behaviour of some human types in the play as a point of departure to form the dramatic line in running the conflict between the past and the future, as we find the characters Mubarak, Hamad and Ommul Zain personify always the fears of change especially concerning values and traditions. That is why through their dialogue and action they stress their clinging to those values and traditions. In their dramatic structure, these characters keep representing the bleak side of the fear of the shock of the future and the changes the future brings about which will alter their lives thoroughly.

Ahmad: When a thing changes, it should change things with it<sup>42</sup>.

The fall of the nest, the symbol of the past, becomes the beginning of the retreat of the past and the change of reality. The collapse of the nest is the symbol of the waning of values and customs which were prevalent.

Mubarak: Even this nest which witnessed a long life kept holding itself until its tenant went away....it fell to pieces.<sup>43</sup>

<sup>40</sup> *Ommul-Zain*, Act Two, p.3

<sup>41</sup> *Ibid*, p.4

<sup>42</sup> *Ommul-Zain*, Act Three, p.4

<sup>43</sup> *Ibid*

Although the play has a spectacular aspect which depicts the crisis of confrontation and tension at the point where two cultures meet and all the values, traditions and intellectual and social dimensions that each of these two cultures have, this spectacular aspect gets mixed with some melodramatic situations and events such as Rashid's drowning in the sea when the ship capsizes because of high waves, and also Hamad's tragedy when he returns after a long separation to see that his girl Ommul Zain is married to another man. Besides, the sad ballad that intervenes in some of the play's scenes adds more sense of grief and melancholy which definitely forms the dimensions of the situation which Al -Mannai intends to depict with his biased outlook at the past.

On the other hand, we find that play's dramatic structure is characterized by some sort of weakness and tepidity in the dialogue. This is due to lack of analytic outlook on which situations are based. The characters, moreover, are often without dimensions or they lack the intellectual insight to be based on in their situations when they encounter contrary situations. From this standpoint, the manner of character portrayal became based on portraying flat superficial appearances. We can thus realize that Al Mannai depended on the realistic mode to dramatize situations like Abu Rashid's situation with his spirit of materialism and his denial of Hamad by not consenting to his marrying Ommul Zain, or Salem Al Dukkhal's exit or the nest's collapse out of a sudden. Here, there is the theme of the spirit of class distinction coming as a result of economic changes as we find through the dialogue between Abu Rashid and Sharifa, Hamad's sister that Abu Rashid justifies his situation which is Ommul Zain's not getting married to Hamad on basis of that he should look for the right girl for him.

Abu Rashid: Hamad is as good as my son, and I am looking for the right girl for him.

Sharifa: There are girls who are right for him, and girls who aren't right for him, uncle.<sup>44</sup>

Dramatic plot in Al Mannai is based on the contradiction between past and future but, as already mentioned above, this conflict is often due to the sense of change as there are no types who adopt this insight or try to assert it if we exclude Abu Rashid's behaviour and stances already referred to above. The rest of the characters' behaviour, manners and dialogues suggest a kind of precaution and tension towards the future. These characters try to cling to the values of the past as in the case of Mubarak, Ommul Zain and Sharifa. As for the tendency for innovation and change as an intellectual stance, there is no character that embraces or adopts this vision except perhaps when the dramatist makes Ahmad, who is a minor character in the play, express his joy and happiness about this change.

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<sup>44</sup> *Ommul-Zain*, Act Three, p.4

If Al Mannai's *Ommul-Zain* represents his first attempt at playwriting as well as it is the first play in Qatar that tackles the issue of change and the problem of conflict between the past and the present, we should not be too expectant about the existence of an artistic maturity or the crystallization of a clear intellectual stance towards the issue of change. Abdul Rahman Al Mannai's intellectual stance in his latter plays such as *Night, O Night, Like This, O Zafaran?* and others which I will deal with later on.

It suffices to say that the issue of change and the conflict of generations and the clarity of the cultural barrier between the fathers' and children's ways of thinking have all been tackled by a number of plays, as these are issues that forced themselves on the Gulf communities due to rapidity of change. We notice this in many a dramatic work in the Arab Gulf area, such as in Saqar Al Rashood's *Traditions*, Hussain Al Saleh's *People and People* and others<sup>45</sup>. Dramatists have been preoccupied with the issue of change and the accompanying sense of tension, anxiety and contradictions, and has become the almost ready made instant dramatic material to deal with such an issue.

As a matter of fact, the situation in Al Mannai's *Ommul Zain* pivots round the issue of change and the conflict between the past and the future in a framework of a sense of fear and change. Conflict, however, was not

crystallized forcibly as a counter power represented by certain characters, based on a philosophy or an intellectual stance so that it leads to a sort of dramatic confrontation between the situations of the play. This is naturally due to, as already mentioned above, the fact that play shows the beginning of the era of change and the shifts in the social structure. At such a time there was no generation that absorbed the new culture so that there would be a cultural gap or a difference in the fathers' and children's ways of thinking to a degree that makes the cultural disparity a point of departure or a basis for the discrepancy or contradiction in the style of behavior and manners. From this standpoint we could find that Al Mannai's characters in his plays are characterized by fickleness in the way he depicts their life styles or the ambiguity in the tendencies and situations his characters suffer. Perhaps the issue of the conflict between the old and the new becomes clear when over the surface floats a type of intellectual layer different in its way of thinking from the previous generation or what is known as the generation conflict. The children's generation has been influenced by the new culture and many a youth has obtained the highest university degrees and mixed and hobnobbed with people from various

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<sup>45</sup> See Dr. Ibrahim Ghloom's *The Theatre and Social Change in the Arabic Gulf*, p.75 and see also Dr. Ali Al-Rae's *Theatre in the Arab World*, p.19

communities with different customs, traditions and life styles. It goes without saying then that these young people's outlook at reality in which live their fathers who still cling to their own customs and traditions and life styles to which they are used is completely different. From here began the image of conflict or disparities to form an important aspect in community life and structure and in the way of interaction of even the members of the same family. The issue of conflict becomes almost theatricalised on the ground of reality.

Thus we find many plays and fiction works that great the issue of conflict and cross purposes between the two generations where the cultural gap is not only between one community and another but in the same community, resulting from the quick shift experienced by the area. In Mohammed Mubarak Al-Ali's *Up There, God Bless* which is based upon Mahmood Thiyab's *The Old House*, the image between the two generations clarifies as we find Ahmed the educated son who has studied abroad engineering and come back home to become a prominent engineer in his community. Ahmed tries to change much of his life-style in order to be able to exert an influence on his family so that its members change their life styles, especially after his attempt to marry a girl from a wealthy family. In order to keep abreast with that family he has to maintain a high-class appearance. Here he begins to falsify many truths trying to enforce this inclination on the members of his family to prevent the discovery of his secret in front of his fiancée's family. He therefore decides to move his family from its humble home in that old slum to a posh area he lets a house and moves the family there. The father consents to this procedure reluctantly and finally submits to the situation.

Father: Goodness, O, Ahmad's mother, have you forgotten the home where you spent your life and where you brought up your children...Indeed, I am unhappy!<sup>46</sup>

The family seems on the surface to be accepting the change and the new life-style whereas in actual fact, most of its members especially the father and the elder son Ali, a former school drop-out, who is now a labourer, cannot adapt themselves to this change. We find that Ali represents refusal, rebellion and tension.

Ali: We, over there, in our house are respectable in the neighborhood...But over here in this new neighborhood we are looked at as barbarians, uncultured. O, you don't feel like I do... you don't feel the ill-at-ease when you are met by one of them...these snobs who think they are the top ..what swarmed us with them!<sup>47</sup>

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<sup>46</sup> *Up There, God Bless*, Act One, p.3

<sup>47</sup> *Ibid*, p.7



We find the father, too, more irritable about this change, and he leads a life full of stress, anxiety and psychological conflict. But he cannot face up to this new reality.

Father: What do you want me, O Ahmad's mother, to say to them? Do you want me to beg them to respect me...When I was strong I would take them and provide them with everything they needed, but now at the end of my age they have found out I am no longer useful to them. I have become like a toy in their hands...One swears at me, another punishes me, another interrogates me, another wants to show me the door. Why? Because he is an engineer and he is ashamed of our old house! <sup>48</sup>

The dramatic scene intensifies when the educated son decides to remove the father's portrait from the wall to replace it by a painting of a landscape. We clearly notice a tone of unhappiness, pain and submission in the father when he responds to the son's proposal to remove his portrait.

Father: What do you want, Ahmad... You want the portrait not to be here? You are right because this is after all an old portrait as if of some old market guard. <sup>49</sup>

Undoubtedly, the symbolism here, although not as significant as artistic symbolism, denotes clearly the refusal of the past and a call to change it, by a new order. Yet, we find the play lacks the spirit of confrontation and friction which intensifies the dramatic conflict.

In spite of rejection, differences of attitudes and hesitation experienced by some of the characters, the dramatist couldn't intensify the conflict to push it to the extreme of confrontation among the characters as the build-up of the contradictory dramatic characters is insufficient. The contradiction in attitudes should be transformed into a reaction and a confrontation among the characters to be felt by the audience alive on the stage, or as Eric Bentley says, " We have been raised to think that what concerns us in life on the stage is the characters of different individuals, but there is a factor which binds us more tightly and this is a deeper sense of communication and eventually a tighter relationship with the others than we can find in life. Thus is the relation in true confrontation."<sup>50</sup>

We find at the end of the third act, i.e., the end of the play, that the conflict and tension embodied in the father's unconviction, his refusal to live in the new house and his decision to return to the old house are things the father cannot face his son Ahmad with. The father can only protest and threaten when he is with his wife or when he is on his own.

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<sup>48</sup> Ibid, Act One, p.3

<sup>49</sup> Ibid

<sup>50</sup> Eric Bentley, *The Life of the Drama*, p.69

Father: But I just want to know why I was carried away from the house I myself built with my own sweat? Why did he spoil our life...All because of his stupid wife!<sup>51</sup>

Here begins the line of confrontation between the father who tries to regain his position as a father who has authority and the right to make the decision that agrees with his conservative vision of life and the son Ahmad who has begun to lose his enthusiasm for the change he has always sought especially after his disappointment in his fiancée whom he discovers he was been deceived by as she turns out to be stupid and a lazy school girl. He consequently decides to break up his engagement to her. Here begins the process of retreat where his position as the educated son who seeks change weakens and the position of the father and the elder son Ali begins to strengthen. The mother, furthermore, begins to take a stronger stance in the face of the change sought by the educated, cultured children.

The dramatist's vision and attitude to the problem of the change of values is unclear even through running the conflict as the attitude he wants to adopt is not clear. Although we surmise that the dramatist tries to depict an image of retreat in characters who seek change, the conservative characters always look at, the other characters' behaviour to be false and deceptive, and that exhibitionism would push them to falsify the truth. We find the elder brother Ali always describe his educated brother Ahmed to be leading a false and deceptive life.

Ali: I don't do what he does...I never deny my truth and myself or falsify them!<sup>52</sup>

He elaborates to describe the family's life and way of behaviour, after moving to the new house, to be false, deceptive and exhibitionistic.

Ali: All you say about this house and neighborhood is false...You want to know the truth?. Uncover the chair in front of you and see if it isn't the same chair you used to sit on when you would come and visit us in our old house!<sup>53</sup>

Indeed, the dramatist, whether consciously or unconsciously, establishes a link between the new tendencies and the appearances of falsity and vainglory which he finds to be adherent to contemporary life. We find that the pivot of the play's major event, i.e., the play's climax is based on its result on falsity and deception. Ahmad, the educated cultured young man who represents the model of change and innovation is driven by his pretense at modernity and his denial of the past by his love for Miryam the wealthy family's daughter. This love is originally

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<sup>51</sup> *Up There, God Bless*, Act Three, p.5

<sup>52</sup> *Ibid*, p.11

<sup>53</sup> *Ibid*, p. 14

based on falsity and deception. He was deceived by her clothes and external appearance without knowing this girl's truth. We gather that through his conversation with his sister Siham who was rejected by one of his fiancée's relatives because of her appearance and clothes.

Do you know that her cousin the crank has told his aunt that I want to marry Ibtisam but her clothes are not attractive enough, and that I refused her because of this and that I was fascinated by Miryam's beautiful clothes! <sup>(54)</sup>

As a matter of fact, the play, although it tackles an important issue which is the cultural gap and the ensuing conflict which is almost theatricalised in reality, the dramatic structure is characterized by tepidity, shallowness and lacking analytic outlook and special insight in creating dramatic situations which depend on paradoxes, contradictions and friction. Besides, the commonplace linguistic phraseology and direct display of events contribute to the dialogue's tepidity. Yet, we can still say that despite its simplicity, this play is characterized by unity of action and coherence of ideas and situation to a considerable limit.

If Al Mannai's *Ommul Zain* and Mohammed Al Ali's *Up There God Bless* are dominated by the bias towards promoting and maintaining prevalent values and the fear of change and innovation. This is what we also find in Al Mannai's most plays, such as *Like This, O, Zafaran!*, *Night O, Night* and others. In Mohammed Mubarak's play, as already mentioned above, the situation where there is a conflict between prevalent concepts and values on one hand, and the new values and manners, on the other, is unclear on the dramatist's part because it is based on equilibrium and neutrality. In other words, the dramatist has left the conflict between the human types he formed and we therefore don't follow what the dramatist is after concerning the cultural conflict or the clash of values.

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<sup>54)</sup> Ibid Act Three, p.10

## **FAMILY ISSUES:**

It is a commonplace knowledge in sociological studies that the family represents a social unit in the social macrocosm structure to which it belongs. Any changes or upheavals that take place in the community should necessarily be reflected in their impact on the family. Moreover, the changes that occur in the family structure and the emerging shake-up in the family structural basics particularly in the relationships among the family members affect the community as a whole, or it is a microcosmic image of what happens in the macrocosmic community's structure.

In its different problems, the family has become a central theme in many a dramatic work, we nonetheless, should not forget that this microcosmic type which provides dramatists with dramatic material is by itself the whole community's pattern or symbol, for the family as a microcosmic social unit is as well a microcosmic image of the community at large and one of its layers. Says Dr. Ibrahim Goloom:

The family is characterized by attracting different standards of heritage, morals, religion and politics. It is like a magazine for community culture, an area for implementation of law and the store of values. Therefore, when those standards and values are exposed to danger in as many ways as there are different attitudes, family life acquires its dramatic elements including the embryo of conflict.<sup>55</sup>

We find, in fact, that many family issues such as children's delinquency or their revolt towards fathers orders, family disintegration and the absence of love and sympathy among its members are all factors for general characteristics which the family milieu represents.

Undoubtedly, the cultural gap or what is called the generation conflict is the most important factors which affect the family structure and eventually lead to the crack-down of the family's traditional system in terms of family members relationships among each other. It is well known that the social make-up in the Gulf area is established on basis of the systems and standards which these communities inherited from tribal system which is a strict system in its adherence to customs and traditional values.

On his part, the individual is utterly obedient to family system and traditions of the tribe he belongs to. Naturally, the processes of social changes become slow and difficult, even they entail some conflict, tension and anxiety not only between the individual and the family or the individual and the community but between the individual and himself due to inherited deeply rooted values which shape socially and culturally the individual's personality, and hence

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<sup>55</sup> Dr. Ibrahim Ghloom, *Theatre and Social Change in the Arab Gulf*, p. 120

dramatic conflict in the characters or the educated cultured types acquires another dimension, i.e., the inner or psychological conflict and how far the character's ability is to overstep that heritage and those concepts which form an aspect of its social and moral life. Despite the rebellion of these types sometimes, we find them hesitant, even surrendering, reconciling or compromising. This happens on these types' part, even the most innovative of them. This is conspicuous enough in many a situation, or at least in some dramatists. The culturally open-minded type often forms the equation or the second party in the conflict and confrontation between the family's traditional system and its innovative aspiration and inclination to change.

I will deal with some of the family's most important issues treated by some plays, keeping in mind that these plays depict the experiences of some dramatists at the beginning of their writing for the theatre. These plays, therefore, are characterized by shallowness and inappropriateness in respect of dramatic standards of artistic structure. By the nature of their dramatized local themes taken from the community's reality, they are often not imitations of other artistically mature plays. From this standpoint we notice that these plays are nearer to casual spontaneous theatre as they often lack analytic aspect, climax and coherence, in addition to their direct presentation of ideas and the dramatists' imaginative limitation which leads to lack of consistency between events and situations as well as to the absence of unity of action in forming the plays' structure and artistic cohesion.

The issues that have formed the family drama usually revolve round three obvious pivots, such as very high dowries, how a girl gets married, polygamy, family disintegration and children's perversion. On the other hand, the prevalence of traditional themes at the beginning of the rise of drama in the region is an ordinary phenomenon which we can find to be clear in a number of Arab theatres. This is due to the emergence of these themes on the surface in a direct way that makes it easy to put them in a dramatic form, in addition to the audience's acceptance and craving for social criticism and satire to be dramatized in front of it live, and this eventually pushes him to respond extremely spontaneously.

If some look at the question of dowries and marriage style as traditional themes already often raised and treated by many a writer in the shapes of social essays, short stories or plays, we in fact look at them as a symbol of revolt against the system of traditions in all of its dimensions. The question is not merely that of marriage, as individualism, personal freedom, absence of fathers authority, social structure system in marrying relatives and other prevalent concepts in the family system have all come to be categorized under this symbol which is embodied in the style of marriage and revolt against it. The phenomenon of high dowries in

the Qatari community emerged clearly with the social changes and the dramatic jump witnessed by the region after the discovery of oil, yet the problem by itself has historical roots in the social system in respect of the marriage conventions and the community's outlook at the girl's point of view to this issue as the family, especially the father, becomes the absolute decision maker. This system was one of the factors which led to the complication of the problem of the marriage style and high dowries and thus there is no room left for choice or understanding between the two concerned parties. Dramatists dealt with this problem of fixed and enforced marriage from two angles, one of which is the conventional outlook and social concepts which stipulate marriage from relatives. This is in addition to the cousins' priority in the girls to marry them for reasons already mentioned above and which go back to values that do not stem from religion but from the inherited tribal system which aims at achieving more social ties and maintaining family or tribal unity. There is a number of plays which deal with this aspect or discuss the problem of marriage and the family from this standpoint. On the other hand, due to the immaturity of the artistic experience in these plays, I will deal with one example which is perhaps one of the most mature in this respect and that is Saleh Al- Mannai's and Adil Saqar's *Ibtisam in the Dock* presented on stage in 1985.

The plot is about the problem of relatives' marriage and these relatives' priority in their right to the girl. Ibtisam is a girl, influenced by contemporary life, believes in a girl's freedom and her right in choosing her husband. From this standpoint ensues a relationship between her and Ahmad. The father, on the other hand, has decided that she is to marry Ateeq his nephew, a person known for his being stupid and almost a half-wit to the extent of bordering on mental retardation. By the force of his being a relative, the father insists that his daughter marry him, whereas we find the mother try to pressurize the father and the daughter to marry Khalid, the mother's nephew. Ibtisam, however, refuses both, although she cannot reveal to her parents the truth about her relationship with Ahmad. She stresses the importance of her having an opinion about choosing her husband, that marital life must be based on understanding and that past life-style has changed.

Father, times have changed and I want the man who understands me and whom I understand ... the man I feel close to me. <sup>56</sup>

But how could a girl talk to her family like this? These are the outcomes of the new life and types of change in family relationships, as well as the disappearance of the father's authority or at least its diminishing in front of the individualistic tendency to be free from old concepts

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<sup>56</sup> Saleh Al-Mannai and Adel Saqar, *Ibtisam in the Dock*, p.6

in facing modern culture influences. Here we find the strangeness of the situation for the father.

Bu Jassim : Strange, really, you are introducing us to new ways, as we have never heard to this except in films and books.<sup>57</sup>

The dramatist tries to depict a comic image of the marriage style in the traditional system, for when the conflict intensifies and the situations are at cross- purposes among the three parties : father, mother and Ibtisam, they agree that the girl should accept the first young man who enters their house and each wishes his or her dream to be fulfilled. The father wishes the first young man to enter the house to be his nephew Ateeq, the mother wishes it is going to be Khalid, her nephew and Ibtisam wishes him to be Ahmed the man he loves. The girl restores to a trick as she telephones Ahmed and speaks to him about the situation and urges him to come quickly. Ahmed, however, hesitates, so Khalid arrives first. Ibtisam fools Khalid and makes him go away, hoping that Ahmed would turn up, but she is surprised by the entrance of Ateeq, her other cousin. The father decides to carry out the condition they have agreed about. Finally Ibtisam prefers Khalid and confesses the truth that Khalid was the first to enter the house but she sent him away, and Ibtisam and Khalid eventually get married to live a marital life full of unhappiness, tension and rebellion against her husband. This situation pushes Khalid to make up his mind to travel and keep away claiming that he wants to study abroad. This makes the wife go back to her senses and admit her mistake and finally decides to travel with her husband.

The play's finale comes undoubtedly with the reconciliation between the past and the present or better still, we find the dramatists conclude the play with the triumph of the old concepts and the ineffectiveness of the new ones, as in the end, the wife surrenders and accepts the marriage imposed on her. Is this outcome, the marriage imposed on her by the dramatists to show the triumph of old values on new ones, and that they are better? To answer such questions we will step into the problem of the intermingling of form and content in the artistic work. This play's physical incidents or events are means to reveal certain meanings or concepts or innermost recesses of the human psyche. Intellectual content or the moral of artistic works is a conclusion deduced often from the nature of events. There ought to be no contradiction between the courses of events and what they suffer and between the issues resulting from them. As we noticed the main event's climax and that is marriage is established by the dramatist on a shallow and funny basis, or in a sarcastic way as the dramatists cisticise

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<sup>57</sup> Ibid

this conventional method of marriage as they make it happen as a result of co-incident for the first in-comer to the house should be accepted by the girl to be her husband, and it is so happened that it is Khalid whom she had refused before. The play was against her will for materialistic or familial purposes.

The dramatist, in order to highlight this outcome and to support conventional standards, depicts the character of Ahmed the young man who has a relationship with Ibtisam as an unreliable person who cannot bear responsibilities but the question raised here in the situation by the dramatists is whether the fault is in the girl's evaluation or in the method she uses. This situation makes us believe or admit that the other method is right.

This is the play's conclusion and the solution accepted and proposed by the dramatists and that Ibtisam is the model of the educated girl who in the course of events tries to refuse the standards and ways of behaviour that do not comply with reason and logic. She keeps resisting the family pressure and she faces everybody including her brother Jassim that cultured, educated young man who always talks about culture and its importance and that it is the basic of the building and development of the community. He, thus, raises up such resonant slogans.

Strange that everything they need they shout for it. If we solved every problem with ease and thinking and culture, none of us would be tired.<sup>58</sup>

We find him, however, stand against his sister Ibtisam and he doesn't try to understand her problem. On the contrary, he takes the family's side and pressurises Ibtisam to obey and yield to the situation.

Jassim : This girl should be stopped ... we should teach her a lesson so that everyone would understand . It will be you and I who will do this, I the astronomical physicist, Jassim son of Bu Jassim! <sup>59</sup>

We thus find the retreat and defeat of modern concept in front of conventional standards, values and ways of behaviour. The dramatists stress this in the character Ibtisam who gives up her previous opinions and surrenders to reality without convictions or justifications on which this change or retreat stands, except of course the submission to prevent customs and conventions represented by the unknown voice which symbolises community voice with all its conventions and customs.

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<sup>58</sup> *Ibtisam in the Dock*, Act One, p.12

<sup>59</sup> *Ibid*



Voice : Man cannot be separated from the community, and he usually doesn't see his faults and defects which people see very clearly. Because of this he must continuously review his behaviour and conduct through marriage with the others so that he would understand life and what is going on around him.

Ibtisam : Indeed, I am wrong and you are right.

Voice : Agreed. This is the first step.

Ibtisam : I was deceived by Ahmed's love.

Voice : A false imaginary love. Ahmed used to work in the dark where Khalid was in the light. Ahmed was asking to enter through the window but Khalid entered through the door. Ahmed is a failure, Khalid is a success.

Ibtisam : That is right. <sup>60</sup>

Thus, the types of cultured characters become types whose stances are characterised by retreat, hesitation and inability to face reality in the end, they

surrender to their situation and they are nearer to romantic characters in their responses to face conflicts. The truth which we deduce from this play and other plays is that the characters are often mere means to show or represent reality or depict an incident through action or dialogue. The situation becomes more important than characters despite all their points of significance and the stances they adopted in their conflict. The situation with its dimensions and significances becomes the end regardless of the outcome of the dramatic conflict they go through for the sake of their ideas. If standards of kinship and concept of social structure and its outlook and insistence on familial and tribal unity have formed certain codes of behaviour in the marriage style which now clash with the inclination towards individualism resulting from modern civilization and culture and if this issue is one of the points on which dramatic climax is based in many a play, the other point of this issue springs from the outcome of contemporary civilisation itself, or indeed it is its result, and by this is meant the spirit of materialism which is one of the characteristic of this civilisation. If the problem of marriage is part of the influence of kinship, it has also become dominated by the spirit of materialism. The exaggeration in dowries and the outlook at the girl by some being a piece of merchandise to be sold, have become among the most important issues to be treated by playwright. There is a number of plays which have dealt with this aspect of marriage, such as Abdullah Ahmed's and

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<sup>60</sup> Ibid, p.40

Asim Tawfiq's *Girls Market*, Abdullah Ahmed's *Spinster*, Mohamed Mubarak Al -Ali's *Khulood* and Mohamed Mubarak Al Ali's and Ahmed Abdul Malik's *Celibacy Club*. All of these plays are written in the vernacular and most of them are similar if not repeated experiments in their human types and style of treatment. This is due, as already mentioned, to direct depiction of ordinary daily life incidents without going deep enough in intellectual and psychological dimensions or specifying the vision of a given situation sought by the playwrights. From here the similarity among these plays become invetiable, as the depth and maturity of experience are the basis of disparity among playwrights although the subject is one. Ordinary idea or raw material varies from one playwright to another according to the style of treatment and the playwright's depth of experience. As for direct depiction and shallow treatment, these two elements will not change the nature of these themes or daily life's prominent problems.

I am now selecting a representative model of these plays which deals with or treat casually the issue of high dowries and as already mentioned, this play does not differ in its style of treatment from the rest of the plays which deal with the same issue.

By its title, *Girls Market* written by the two playwrights Abdullah Ahmed and Asim Tawfiq, we can tell the dimensions of the issues explored by the play. Better still, this play depicts accurately the idea on which it is based and which is forced marriage of the girl for material reasons and due to the spirit of greed which has prevailed in some people's life. The play presents the issue of marriage when marriage becomes a sort of merchandise where the father looks at the proposer in the light of his material status and how much he can pay without taking into consideration the girl's opinion. In this play there is the tragedy of the girl Latifa who belongs to a poor family. A love relationship starts between Latifa and Jassim, a young man with a moderate income who lives in the same neighborhood. It so happens that Abdul Rahman, a wealthy man, falls for her and proposes to her father on her behalf, and her father, Saad agrees immediately, welcoming this good hunt:

Saad: I will forget everything but I will never forget that afternoon when I heard a knock on the door, and who was there in front of me but Abdul-Rahman son of Ali the well known businessman who came to my house, asking what I don't know, and I got confused because how can I be comparable to him!.<sup>61</sup>

Through contradiction, the playwright depicts the rejected image of this marriage style. The father and the brother are happy because the daughter has got married to this

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<sup>61</sup> Abdullah Ahamed and Asim Tawfiq, *Girls' Market*, p.1

rich man who is now spending money lavishly on them and fulfilling all their needs. They pride on what their son –in-law owns such as luxurious property, cars and whatnot. On the other hand, the girl lives contrary to that. Indeed, her life is totally miserable and she herself is rebellious and refuses all her husband's requests although he is nice and gentle towards her. He is also patient towards her behavior, which annoys everybody including her family members. Later on, she resorts to birth control pills to avoid getting pregnant by this husband who has been forced on her. When the husband discovers this and she confesses she doesn't love him and that she has a relationship with another man, Jassim whom she loves, the husband decides to divorce her. Eventually, she marries Jassim. She, alas, discovers later on that she has been deceived by this love as she discovers that Jassim is a perverse person and an opportunist who blackmails her by procuring a lot of money from her, only to marry another girl who is rich. Latifa finds no other solution but get a divorce from Jassim and thus lives to regret her stance to her former husband.

We notice, like we do in the previous play, *Ibtisam in the Dock*, that this play ends up with backing prevalent values and customs, directly or indirectly. Actually, new and modern concepts are condemned and thus they are depicted as failure. The girl is wrong in choosing her husband although it is she who decides and chooses. We, however, find that some of these plays depict this choice in a negative way. The young man is characterized by perversion, self seeking and incapability to bear responsibility. All these factors lead to the failure of marriage and the girl's sense of her defeat and then her retreat and surrender to her parents' imperatives. All this indicates that most dramatists are still adherent more to conventional values and customs and they back and promote them. We find this in Saleh Al-Mannai's character Ibtisam when she is disappointed by Ahmad, the young man she chooses, and whom she prefers to her husband.

Likewise in this play the situation is repeated when Latifa discovers that she is deceived by Jassim, the young man she chooses, and the result is retreat and admission of error.

The truth which can be deduced from these plays is that some of them are structured in such a way as to give the impression that they are social critical plays and their themes are based on a certain critical phenomenon. We, nonetheless, are surprised at the end of these plays that the ending or the finale comes contradictory to the play's structure of the intellectual stances round which the play rotates. From this standpoint, the style of

presentation and the clarity of vision are two important factors for the play's success and its safety against contradiction between form and content or the outcome desired by the playwright. Unclarity of vision or situation made him lose the ability to present the alternative. If concepts, standards and old ways of behavior were in such a position as to be criticized according to these plays in their general framework as already mentioned, and that the new concepts have proved credible as some plays indicate, what is the alternative theme? We don't approve of some of the old generation's concepts and standards which wants to use when dealing with reality because the nature of life's reality has changed. On the other hand, we don't trust the new generation's indications and style of behavior in freeing itself from many values and inherited customs. The dramatist must have the clear vision which enables him to offer an alternative. I don't mean by this that the stage should turn into a pulpit or a lecture-hall or that the characters turn into preachers and platform-speakers. I mean that the spectator should not leave the theatre auditorium and he doesn't know what he wants or he is made to live at odds with reality without the dramatist giving him some sort of intimations or limits to solutions.

The characters in *Girls Market* are flat and not felt by the audience to have psychological or intellectual dimensions. This is due to the superficial or external treatment of the problem without plunging deeply enough into its different dimensions. This is what led to the characters' lack of the ingredients of development, vitality, in addition to the tepidity of dialogue and weakness of confrontation, although the play is based on the idea of conflict, contradictions and confrontation.

## **THE QUESTION OF POLYGAMY**

A social phenomenon in the Gulf community is that of polygamy which is more outspread among the old generation. It has its historical background in the nature and family system in the old Arab community. It has its own causes and justifications, the foremost of which is people's love to have large numbers of children as the nature of tribal life and what surrounds it necessitates this. Then came Islam with its noble values and principles to approve this system or custom although Islam put it in the right frame and specified for it certain criteria, stipulations and bases which regulate marital relations. Polygamy in Islam is not absolute, and there should be reasons and causes for it; fairness among wives is the most important discipline that rules marital relations in cases of polygamy. I don't intend to go into details of discussing this issue as it has been studied

both extensively and intensively by scholars and researchers. Polygamy in Qatari community as portrayed by some plays has acquired another dimension after the cultural shift the Gulf community has witnessed coming, as a result of the economic shift which was the fruit of oil discovery in the area. This shift encouraged many an individual in the area to leave and travel to Arab and non-Arab countries. Doubtless, the individual's high income provided elderly men with opportunities of new marriages, especially to women from outside the country. Certainly, polygamy has its own social, economic, familial and psychological problems for the family as a whole, let alone if the new wife was a foreigner and therefore stranger to the community's customs and conventions. In this case, the effects should be negative and the consequent problems should be more complex, especially among the children and what they suffer by the duality of belonging and the resultant psychological problems and difficulty in coping with their brothers or friends. Furthermore, with the wider outspread of the foreign marriage phenomenon and elderly men's polygamy, many a play appeared which depicted this phenomenon in a comic way, aiming at social criticism in order to treat this phenomenon and put an end to it.

Hassan Hussain's *Three to One* gives us a comic image through which the dramatist tries to lampoon this phenomenon and to reveal a number of social problems resulting from it, and the clashes that ensue between the wives, beside the comic discrepancies which symbolize the depth of the tragic situation of some of the foreign wives and their inability to cope with the new life and the customs and conventions prevalent in the community. Abu Khalid, the play's protagonist represents a model of that group that invests its material capability in order to fulfill its desires and whims at the expense of the others. He, therefore, resorts to mendacity and deceit and he gets married to many women and each time he claims that he is unmarried. He deceives his first wife Om Khalid who has lived with him in the days of misery and poverty by deceiving her that he is going away to Egypt for medical treatment. In Egypt, he meets his daydreams girl Nabawiyah who is so young as to be his daughter. He claims to her that he is unmarried, and under material temptations she finally agrees to marry him. He takes her back home to Qatar and to her shock she discovers that he is previously married and has children. Need puts her amidst the inevitability of the situation, but she lives in a continuous clash with the previous wife. The arena of conflict widens to include the son Khalid whose life changes dramatically to a psychological conflict, anxiety and tension due to the continuous clashes and rows between the father and the mother that he finally decides to cancel his

travel abroad to continue this comic way when everybody when everybody is surprised that Nerjis the Indian girl whom Abu Kahlid has brought from India supposedly as a servant, is actually his wife! He has also deceived her when he has married her during one of his trips to India claiming to her that has been unmarried. When they arrive in the airport he persuades her to put on the role of a servant so that he can let her into the house, and in order to avoid the previous wives' fury. The truth is soon uncovered and the two wives try to manipulate Nerjis and treat her as a servant and she finds that she should reveal her real identity, asking for divorce from her husband and deciding to go back to her country.

The playwright tries to present the issue of polygamy with its social dimension and its negative consequences in a sarcastic way which is the best way to criticize some abnormal practices and refused behavior. Sarcasm portrays these defects on stage, but the characters often remain stereotypes unable to develop, due to the shallow depiction of the issue's dimension. In other words, the playwright doesn't overstep the external image which dominates these characters because he keeps away from the documentary style concerning motivations and inclinations. Abu Khalid is portrayed as the deceptive polygamist but without enabling us get close enough to the psychological, social or cultural motives which push him to this kind of behavior. Also, Nabawia the Egyptian wife whom Abu Khalid deceives and marries is not portrayed with depth and we don't appreciate her tragedy. Isn't she, after all, a sample of a huge group pushed by need and poverty to accept to marry, as it were, a stranger? What happens to such a group deceived into a community which has its own conventions and customs which may not agree with the way these girls have been brought up? Khalid, the old wife's son is not properly manipulated by the dramatist as best as he could. The dramatist could have deepened the tragedy of children who always represent the victim of parents' clashes. The dramatist, however, refers to this aspect in an oratorical style:

Khalid: The important thing is that you victimize us...It is we who bear your mistakes...God forgives you...you don't think of the consequences...!<sup>62</sup>

The dramatist could, nevertheless, at the end of the play get closer to his characters trying to reveal or depict the inner suffering of these characters after the escalation of the situation and discovery of the truth as each character begins to review its situation. Here, the situation becomes deeper and more dramatic in presenting the ideas lived by

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<sup>62</sup> Hassan Hussain, *Three to One*, p.32

each character and the tragic sense evoked in the audience. The playwright, however, aborted these dramatic situations with all their associations as he ended his play in a didactic way by making Abu Khalid his spokesman.

Abu Khalid: Let nobody laugh, as laughter could be disastrous. You laughed on me because I satisfied my needs. But, be honest, to how many of you such things happened..! True, I was self-seeking and I wronged the others...but now, I am bewildered among the three women.!

Indeed, although *Three to One* stops at depicting external phenomena and portraying an external image of the types it deals with, this play is characterized by coherence and unity of action, and is free from forced characters and sub-plots which do not contribute to the main ideas or actions.

Despite the number of plays which treat the issue of polygamy, these plays hardly differ among each other in their styles of presentation and treatment which do not go further than external phenomenon of dramatizing these issues or problems. In case of absence of the dramatist's intellectual vision or his standpoint towards the issue, and the absence of the analytic dimension from the style of treatment, it follows naturally that these plays are similar in their style of treatment. Here we find the huge similarity in many a play which have dealt with this issue. Saleh Al- Mannai's and Othaman Mohammed Ali's *The Bewildered One* hardly differs from *Three to One* mentioned before. The problem round which the action of *The Bewildered One* rotates is the clashes that ensue among the three wives and within this framework the play's events occur. Ghanim, the protagonist of *The Bewildered One* has the self same characteristics and behaviors of Abu Khalid the protagonist of *Three to One*. Ghanim in *The Bewildered One* is the type of character that follows its desires, wishes, emotions and lust to the point of affecting negatively other people's dignity ad future.

As we found in the former play Abu Khalid lying, cheating and deceiving his wives as he claims to each one he intends to marry that he is unmarried and then the truth is revealed putting the victimized wife in a difficult position, we likewise find that Ghanim in the latter play takes the same track of behavior as he marries his third wife Mervet the Egyptian claiming to her that he is unmarried. When he brings her with him to Qatar she discovers that he already has two wives. As a result of this, the play's central issue begins to rotate within the frame of clashes and conflict that arise among the three wives.

If in the previous play there is at the end a reconciliation between the Qatari wife and the Egyptian one to confront the third wife, the Indian one, we find in *The Bewildered One* the same image of reconciliation between the two previous wives in their confrontation of the new Egyptian wife. We thus notice that in *The Bewildered One* the dramatist could touch upon other significant aspects which at the same time do not infringe the play's overall framework nor the unity of action concerning the problem of polygamy. Indeed, we find the first wife Hissa criticize the second wife Aiysha who is educated and works as a teacher. Hissa slights Aiysha for leaving the house and thus neglecting her husband and her housework. Many still believe that woman's going out to work is questionable although this issue has been settled socially. Another dimension touched upon by the two playwrights in this play is the family disintegration which ensues from the problem of polygamy and the effects it leaves on the children, as we find that in the dialogue between Salim, Ghanim's son by his first wife and the doctor who has come to treat his sick father.

Salim: Aren't you a doctor?

Doctor: Yes

Salim: And my father listens to you? Good. Tell him if he doesn't give me money he will die.

Doctor: But this is a lie, and telling lies is a shame.

Salim: Take it easy, doctor, there is nobody in this house who doesn't lie to the others as well as to himself.

Doctor: Oh. No your cause is extremely difficult. Good bye!<sup>(63)</sup>

It is noticeable that the playwrights portrayed Hissa the illiterate as a strong woman in facing problems and the more capable rational behavior, contrary to Aiysha who stands helpless in facing the situation after learning that her husband has got married for the third time. She resorts to Hissa her rival fellow wife in order to help her find a way with which to solve the new situation. We find this illiterate woman plan and direct affairs and instructs Aiysha the educated one who is puzzled by the husband's behavior.

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<sup>63</sup>Saleh Al-Mannai & Mohammed Othman, *The Bewiblered One* p.24



In the final analysis, in respect to the obvious phenomenon in these plays which deal with polygamy, we find that the foreign wife is depicted as obedient to the husband and she is always abler to win and dominate his emotions whereas the Qatari woman often appears to be over-self confident and she doesn't know how to flatter or move the man's emotions as we find that in *Three to One* or the *Bewildered One* .

On the other hand, the foreign woman appears to be the victim and she often ends up in a situation where she rejects this reality and she wishes to go back home to her country of origin which means her inability to cope, although the playwrights in the previous plays attribute this rejection and retreat to clear and close reasons, i.e the marriage's being based on cheating and deception.

Mervet: Our marriage was based on deception, Mr. Ghanim. Anything based on falsehood remains false.

Ghanim.: I don't believe it.....Is this reasonable?

Mervet: Very much so, Mr. Ghanim

Ghanim: But, I can't do without you...It is impossible that I divorce you.

Mervet: I am determined to get a divorce.<sup>64</sup>

When all is said, despite the simplicity of treatment of the issue of polygamy in the Qatari theater, the attention–turning to this issue is by itself part of observing the process of interaction and change experienced by the community. When we consider these plays, which deal with such issues, we definitely sense the dimensions they aim at whether these dimensions are social, intellectual or economic. For instance, what is the relation between wealth and high income and polygamy? We ought to take into consideration the absence of awareness of the issue's dimensions to some people besides that rapid social openness and economic boom and the gap between rapid material change and the tardiness of intellectual and cultural change. These and other such dimensions come within polygamy and other issues which the dramatist can detect with a deep probing insight on which is based the dramatist's clearcut stance and when the goal aimed at by the artistic work becomes clear to the audience.

If the theater in Qatar has considered the issues that have a local nature and has treated many problems related to social relation, the issues of the Pan-Arab homeland

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<sup>64</sup> *The Bewildered One*, p.51

have not been neglected as these problems and issues in addition to the national and economic circumstances through which the Arab World is passing are the Arab individual's issue wherever he is. From this standpoint, we find that the theatre in Qatar has paid due attention to these national issues, national awareness and Arab cares began to assume different dimensions on the stages in Qatar. Besides, the features and dimensions of political vision began to emerge clearly on the stage. Naturally, drama had to leave the family framework and the minor community with its local daily life treatment problems and issues to go more panoramic area to deal with national and humanistic issue. Besides, we find that the intellectual issues which have reformative morals began to be clear in a number of plays, especially in Abdul – Rahman Al-Mannai's plays as we see in *Night, O, Night*, and *Like This, O, Zafran!*, or in some of Ghanim AL –Sulati's plays as in his play *The Pelters*.

Perhaps, the first play which went in this direction, i.e, approaching national issues and dealing with pan-Arab status was *Where To?* Written in the mid –1970s by Abdullah Ahmed and performed in Damascus Theatre Festival in 1977. As this play nearly marks a beginning for the playwright as well as it makes a beginning of the theatrical experience in Qatar, I will deal with it with some tolerance when I consider it according to artistic standards and criteria.

This play doesn't comply with an integral artistic structure as there is no central action upon which the play is based, nor are there distinguishable characters that could form structural unity in the series of various incidents to the point that this or that character forms rotates. The unity of place could perhaps be the only link which connects these characters at the time when we find the playwrights present a number of issues and ideas through the characters. Most of these ideas are characterized by individualism and egotism as each character lives in a conflict with itself or with the others for the sake of fulfilling personal deserves or interests, although there are some innuendoes which condemn the Arab status quos or the negative aspect of our stance as individuals and what this reflects on the Arab Nation's march.

In its general framework, the play depicts a group of contradictions ruled by personal interest among a number of travelers who gather in the airport lobby where the play's entire action takes place. We meet the businessman, the student, the woman –artist, the company representative, the young man, the elderly man, etc. Each one of these people reveals his or her identity and his purpose of the trip through the dialogue that ensues

among them. The aeroplane's delay and the cancellation of the scheduled foreign aeroplane's flight were the central animators of many psychological aspects of the characters.

We deduce by that that the playwright wants to depict for us that the solution and change of the Arab status quo must spring from within and the Arabs should not wait for the others to solve their problems. The foreign airliner fails these passengers and causes them a great deal of pain and suffering. The Arab airliner comes as an alternative to solve their problems. The negative aspects, however, remain in some individuals as blocking factors in the way of the Arab march to bribery or other shameful practices that are far away from all moral values and standards in order to satiate their desires and personal interests. Perhaps emotional fervour led the playwrights to attack everything foreign without the differentiation between what is negative and what is positive. He satirises an official of Electron which is a company that market certain equipment and he calls for not cooperating with him and that it is better to promote Arab goods saying that these foreign companies seek promoting stupidity and ignorance in the Arab community because using Electron goods leads to sloth and laziness.

Nabeel: You are touring the Arab World and you have become the only representative who is marketing foreign goods..... You are spreading stupidity...in an attractive way, though!.<sup>65</sup>

The cancellation of the foreign airoplane's flight the C.C.O. and the frustration it causes to the passengers becomes a symbol of an objective correlative to the West's attitude to the Arabs and what frustrations this thing represent, in addition to the egotism and hatred towards the Arab World and its aspiration to freedom and progress.

Khalid: The C.C.O has got us into this situation

Noora: Wrecked our wishes

Ghanim: Our wishes have nothing to do with this. We are the reason....our ignorance is the reason. They are making use of our ignorance....our disintegration.<sup>66</sup>

Very intricately and with a transparent symbolism emerges to us the image of disparities depicted by the playwright of the man and woman in the Arab community through two of the play's types of characters and these are Abdul Aziz and his wife who accompanies him in his travel. The wife enters the lobby and she is covered with clothes

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<sup>65</sup> Abdullah Ahmad, *Where To?*

<sup>66</sup> Ibid

all over her body and hardly a thing is visible in her. She is silent and motionless till the end of the play. The husband wouldn't allow the airport official to pronounce her name when he is checking their passports, whereas we find the husband Abdul - Aziz approach and flirt with traveling girls or airport females staff. This practice is contradictory to what he practices with his wife round whom he has put a special barrier to separate her from the others.

The play presents a number of issues and ideas but as already mentioned above there is hardly any dramatic sequentially in the play, and thus place becomes the only link among the incidents and ideas presented by the play.

Abdul Rahman Al Mannai's *Night, O, Night* comes at the top of the list of plays which represent this trend, i.e. the plays which treat intellectual and humanistic issues in the framework of political trends. In this play, we find the eternal problem lived by man and his fellow –man dramatized in an image of conflict when human conscience is either absent or is taken over by greed and egotism so that man manipulates his fellow-man to fulfill his desires and achieve his ambitions even at the expense of the others.

Al –Mannai wrote this play in the vernacular, and when it was to be performed at the Damascus Festival, he re-wrote it in classical Arabic. In fact, this play is one of the best plays written by Al-Mannai due to its structural coherence, seriousness of presentation and its idea's richness and depth. Indeed Al-Mannai could make use of tradition with its social, cultural and economic dimensions and through it created a contemporary artistic work as the conflict between good and evil which is the substance for the play's dramatic line. The issue of freedom and justice develops in this play as a basis of this conflict, which the playwright dramatizes through the ship-captain's (the nokhtha) relation with the sailors working on board of the ship in the dive voyages.

The playwright could dramatize to us the image of conflict between freedom and justice on one hand, and bullying and injustice on the other hand in that intense relationship that arises between Abu Fallah, the ship owner who is characterized by bullying and injustice and the townspeople who are good, tolerant and submissive. This bully manipulates his power and his wealth to dominate the destiny of the town. The conflict intensity begins when Abu Fallah doesn't allow townspeople to travel or in other words he refuses to let them work and improve their situation so that they would always be in need of him. Indeed, he offers them some money so that they wouldn't travel and seek a means of living.

Muftah: We are not happy about ourselves.....but what can we do? All ships and boats are Abu Fallah's.....He also has the right to choose the moment of departure.

Mubarak: Two months are gone and we haven't dived into the sea.

Abu Jabbir: As long as we eat and drink, and get our wages...why complain!

Mubarak: Yes, but our morsel is dipped in humility...How long are we going to be like this since sunrise to sunset and we are in this café?.<sup>67</sup>

Abu Fallah manipulates townspeople's silence and submission to his desires, he therefore takes Farha the waterman's daughter by force, and her father and the townspeople take a cowardly stance without showing any sign of resistance or protest. Farha in her ravishment becomes a symbol of the ravishment of freedom which the dramatist makes to be the play's central theme. The dramatist, however, absents it from the scene of events. This is a good vision or trend as this contributes to the play's artistic structure for its absence is a point of departure for the heightening of action and the raising of many puzzled questions among the play's characters, and these are questions which give hints about the dimension of the tragedy. Farha's absence becomes the townspeople's main issue for she is the symbol of absent freedom, and without freedom life becomes meaningless.

Abu Masood: We have got to think. We want to tell people that this village won't be without Farha, daughter of Khamis the waterman<sup>68</sup>.

Here, we can look at waterman as the symbol of the people of the townspeople, and this could be consistent with my interpreting Farha as a symbol of freedom. We can also take Abu Masood to be representing in the play the image of the living rebellious conscience against bullying, injustice and oppression. Indeed, Abu Masood calls the townspeople for rebellion against Abu Fallah's injustice. On the other hand, we find Abu Masood to be a weak character in its intellectual make-up for it doesn't play the proper role in the situation the playwright intends it to adopt and represent. The dialogue is weak and unconvincing for a reformer's character although the play's outcome is positive where good triumphs over evil and despite the emergence of the beginnings of change which the reformer calls for.

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<sup>67</sup> *Night, O' Night*

<sup>68</sup> *Ibid*

The playwright could expose a list of perverse behavior and then dramatize to us those negative practices of some human types. Personal interest and egotism are the two factors that rule the stances of many a character. When Mubarak, for instance, joins forces with Abu Massod, he doesn't do that out of belief in a principle or defense of a cause but he is driven by a personal interest and that is his love of Farha whom he has lost when Abu Fallah has possessed her, so he changes his stance and takes Abu Masood's side.

The sarcastic comic image with all the opportunism and escapism it simultaneously carries is embodied in the scene which shows the peak of tragedy which the play deals with in that summary trial set up by Abu Fallah to look into the case of the girl Farha and the legality of possessing her. We find that all are ruled by personal interests, fear of confrontation, so they take the side of injustice and they support Abu Fallah's possession of the girl, and the waterman stands bewildered and helpless to witness this miserable scene as he sees the entire community stand against him, support the aggressor in his possessing his daughter. The pivot round which the play rotates is the independence of the decision and freedom of taking sides in case the decision-maker is unable to provide a living freely.

Abu Fallah: All of you, come on, sit down as I seek nothing but what is good for you, and to tell a friend from foe, and you should know that good doesn't come except from the one who has it. Come on, Sbat, see what the men want.<sup>69</sup>

The dramatist's intellectual inclination, however, rejects this position as it is the outcome of people's laxity, laziness and dependence. Indeed, change should come from within themselves. The same situation is repeated in the same dramatist's other play, *A Blacksmith's Tale* where we find the dramatist focus on the theme of laxity, laziness and dependence which characterize some people and which eventually lead to subordination. This insight into the characters reality through their relations and dealing realistically, as depicted by the dramatist, affect characterization artistically as we find for instance in the case of Mubark who represents opposition to Abu Fallah, but we find the dramatist has not manipulated it or he doesn't play a prominent part in opposing the other side. Indeed, we find that Muharak's position remains weak and hesitant in confrontations whereas the dramatist could have used this as a means of intensifying the conflict more potently throughout the play, especially that the motivations of conflict between the two

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<sup>70</sup> *Night, O' Night*

characters stem from powerful inclinations and that is each one of them loves Farha. The playwright's vision, however, of his characters' relation to their milieu is what pushes him to place them in such a framework so that conflict between them becomes inconsistent. On the other hand, we find that conflict begins to take its shape and that is the confrontation and reaction at the end of the play when the townspeople declare their mutiny against Abu Fallah and their standing on the waterman's side as they burn Abu Fallah's ships. This is an ending where good, justice and freedom triumph over injustice. Needless to say, the burning of the ships is an allusion to the destruction of the mechanisms of slavery by which Abu Fallah could rule the townspeople.

In fact this play is about to be one the maturest and best plays presented by the Qatari theatre so far from the viewpoint of depth of thought and artistic structure.

As already mentioned above, national inclinations and intellectual issues with reformative and awakening nature began to emerge conspicuously on the Qatari scene, while those conventional themes with transient problems began or almost began to disappear. This phenomenon could be one of the indicators of the development of the theatrical movement in the State of Qatar. This inclination, moreover, indicates an awareness of the role of theatre and its influence on the march of civilization.

As a matter of fact, there are many plays which have such inclinations in theatre from the standpoint of carrying for intellectual, national and political issues as we find in most of Al- Mannai's plays, *Like this, O, Zafaran' A Blacksmith's Tale, Night, O, Night* all of which have been discussed above. Likewise, among the plays which represent this trend is Ghanim Al-Sulaiti's *The Pelters* which depicts in a sarcastic comic way the problem of Arab cross-purposes and their negative effects on the Arab nation. Also, Marzooq Bashir's *The Fault is in\_Ourselves* depicts the deep –rooted disease in this nation's body and this is the marginal differences which distract the nation from basic issues and how this ultimately leads to the nation falling prey to the greedy.

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2. Mohammed Mubarak Al-Ali		1975
3. Saleh Al-Mannai and Aasim Sigur	<i>Ibtissam in the Dock</i>	
4. Abdullah Ahmed and Asim Tewfiq	<i>Girls Market</i>	
5. Hassan Hussein	<i>Three To One</i>	1980
6. Saleh Al-Mannai and Othman Mohammed Ali	<i>The Bewildered</i>	
7. Abdullah Ahmed	<i>Where To?</i>	1976
8. Abdul-Rahman AL-Mannai	<i>Night, O, Night</i>	1984
9. Abdul-Rahman AL-Mannai	<i>A Blacksmith's Tale</i>	1984
10. Abdullah Ahmad Abdullah	<i>Spinster</i>	1972



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